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STARTLING STORIES

THE GLORY THAT WAS

A NOVEL OF OLYMPIAN LAUGHTER

By L. SPRAGUE de CAMP

THE LAST DAYS OF SHANDAKOR

A NOVELET OF ANCIENT MARS

By LEIGH BRACKETT

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Amazing New CREAM Holds Plates Tighter, Longer THAN ANYTHING YOU EVER TRIED

POLI-GRIP

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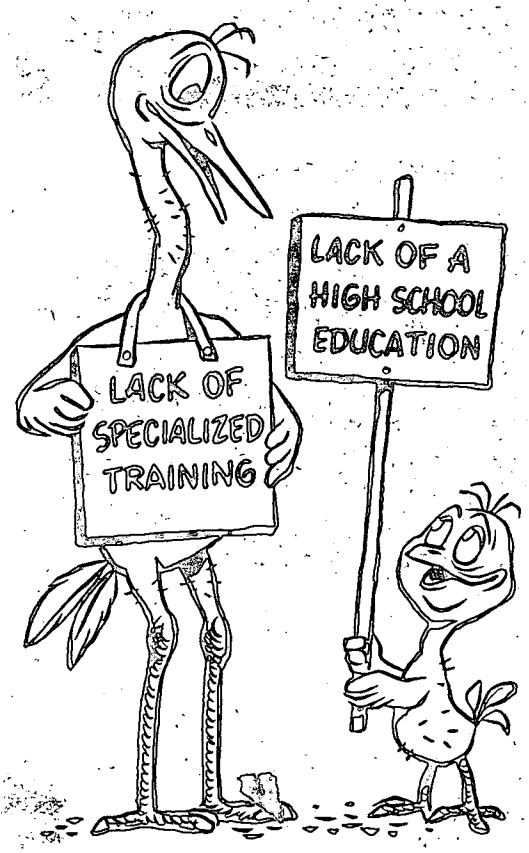

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STARTLING STORIES

Vol. 25, No. 3 A THRILLING PUBLICATION April, 1952

A Complete Novel

THE GLORY THAT WAS

By L. SPRAGUE de CAMP

Bulnes, adventurer, and Flin, scholar . . . the search for a beautiful woman took these men of the 27th Century to Greece of the Golden Age! 12

A Novelet

THE LAST DAYS OF SHANDAKOR . . . . . Leigh Brackett 104

An Earthman discovers that both love and tragedy live on in a long-dead city of Ancient Mars which denies death's reality

Short Stories

THE INTRUDER . . . . . Oliver Saari 89

What's it like to have an exact duplicate of yourself show up?

WELCOME TO LUNA . . . . . Charles E. Fritch 100

He resolved that he would reach the Moon . . . or die trying!

LOOKING FOR SOMETHING? . . . . . Frank Herbert 124

Hypnotist Paul Marcus searched for it in the blonde's mind

Features

THE ETHER VIBRATES . . . . . The Editor 6

A science fiction department featuring letters from readers

HOW'S YOUR VOLTAGE? . . . . . Science Facts 11

New findings which point to the electrical basis of all life

SAMUEL MINES, *Editor*

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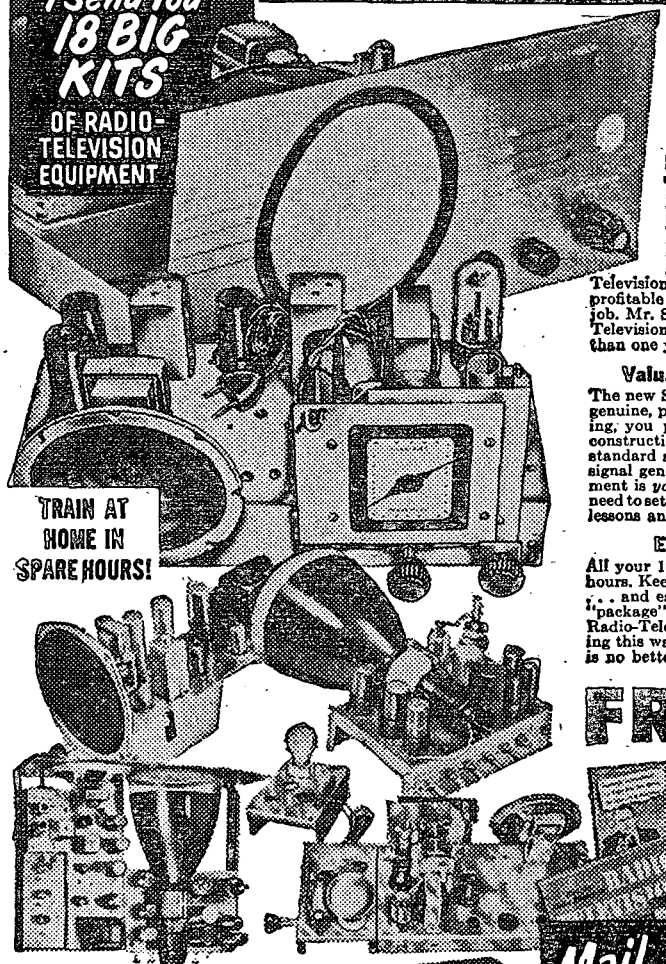

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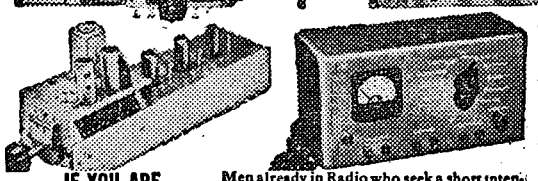

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A Science Fiction Department Featuring Letters from Readers

THE time seems to have come for us to make our position clear on a controversial subject —sex. Or, more specifically, are we or are we not going to have (1) no (2) a little (3) a lot of sex in the magazines? The argument has been sputtering like a decrepit motorcycle in TEV for so long that it is time we dealt with it fairly, as Jurgen used to say.

Let's look at the opposition first. Not too many voices are raised in dissent, and even these are divided into two camps. There are those who are genuinely shocked by any mention of sex and there are those who don't care too much, but would rather have rockets than bosoms. Of those who are shocked, a fair sample is a bit culled from a recent letter, which accused thusly:

"You are using illustrations of the human body to further the cause of getting more people to read science fiction! Your magazines are being made a container for filth and dirt. Why do such filthy, impure pictures have to be used? No one could guess, from the filthy picture on the cover, that such superb literature was behind it."

We Fail to See It!

I wouldn't call this typical. To that person, the human body is indecent unless it is covered from neck to ankles. Let's not be superior, nor sneer at anyone's convictions, but we, personally and objectively, fail to see why the human body is so filthy that it has to be wrapped up like a Christmas package or be considered unfit for mention. People who feel that way about their bodies must hate themselves.

Of course not all of us are attractive enough to stand much exposure and for this purpose clothes have a definite function which is decorative as well as concealing. But there are plenty of faces which are far from attractive and yet custom permits them to be worn right out in the open instead of prescribing masks. Attractiveness or the lack of it is not really the factor here, since naturally only the most attractive subjects are ever visualized by the artist.

But let's be honest. What the objectors really mean is that these pictures are intended to attract attention by utilizing their sex interest. Well, if we are going to use humans at all (and our correspondent seems bitter about that, evidently preferring pictures with no people in them) why shouldn't they be made as interesting as possible? Every normal male is interested in an attractive woman; if he's honest he'll admit it's sex appeal, if he's a hypocrite he'll call it something else. And somewhere in this issue there's a letter from a smart gal demanding that her sex be given a break by having more and better looking men on the covers.

Playing the Ostrich

To deny the interest between the sexes, or to close one's eyes to the dominant role of our bisexual make-up, is simply to play the ostrich. Let's not be childish about it. Whatever other human activities there are—writing books, painting pictures, making music, building bridges, flying to the stars, are all sparked by man's endocrine response to the other sex. It's so fundamental that you cannot have human beings without it—normal human beings at least.

So why do you need it in science fiction? Why can't you just have rockets? Well, occasionally you can. There are good stories without any female interest. But you can't have a steady diet of them without dehydrating the entire field. That was frequently the trouble with many of the early stf stories and is one reason why the material being written today is warmer and fuller and so much closer to real literature. It is better to write about human beings in a science-fiction situation than to write about lifeless gadgets in a void.

But let's look at the other side. A type of

(Continued on page 8)

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THOUGHTS HAVE WINGS

You Can Influence Others With Your Thinking!

TRY IT SOME TIME. Concentrate intently upon another person seated in a room with you, without his noticing it. Observe him gradually become restless and finally turn and look in your direction. Simple—yet it is a *positive demonstration* that thought generates a mental energy which can be projected from your mind to the consciousness of another. Do you realize how much of your success and happiness in life depend upon your influencing others? Is it not important to you to have others understand your point of view—to be receptive to your proposals?

Demonstrable Facts

How many times have you wished there were some way you could impress another favorably—*get across to him or her your ideas*? That thoughts can be transmitted, received, and understood by others is now scientifically demonstrable. The tales of miraculous accomplishments of mind by the ancients are now known to be fact—not fable. The method whereby these things can be *intentionally*, not accidentally, accomplished has been a secret long cherished by the Rosicrucians—one of the schools of ancient wisdom existing throughout the world. To thousands everywhere, for centuries, the Rosicrucians have privately taught this nearly-lost art of the practical use of mind power.

This *Free* Book Points Out the Way

The Rosicrucians (not a religious organization) invite you to explore the powers of your mind. Their sensible, simple suggestions have caused intelligent men and women to soar to new heights of accomplishment. *They will show* you how to use your natural forces and talents to do things you now think are beyond your ability. *Use the coupon below* and send for a copy of the fascinating sealed *free* book, "The Mastery of Life," which explains how you may receive this unique wisdom and benefit by its application to your daily affairs.

The ROSICRUCIANS
(AMORC)

Scribe D.S.H., The Rosicrucians, AMORC,
Rosicrucian Park, San Jose, California.

Kindly send me a free copy of the book, "The Mastery of Life." I am interested in learning how I may receive instructions about the full use of my natural powers.

Name.....

Address.....State.....

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(Continued from page 6)

story is beginning to creep into science fiction which was common some years ago in the now defunct horror magazines. These stories attempt to stun the reader with sex and sadism—torture, perversion, abnormalities and masochism. They've revived the old devil cults, the blend of sex and witchcraft, vampirism, necrophilia, sodomy and all the others. This is something science fiction could do without. It is such a far cry from the normal interest between boy and girl that it hardly seems to be the same subject. And since relatively few people are attracted to such violent abnormalities I doubt that many readers will be found to support the trend.

While it persists, however, it may give science fiction a black eye by associating it with degeneracy.

Honesty in Literature

That is exploitation of sex to an unwholesome degree. Our purpose doesn't even come close to exploitation. No writer has ever received instructions to "put some sex" into a story. If his story doesn't call for it, that's fine. If his story deals with people of different sexes, however, and they get themselves into a spot where a certain amount of sex interest is likely to spark between them, we see no reason why that fact should not be admitted. It is recognized in most of the world's greatest literature and its honesty is exactly what has made that literature great. Hypocrisy, sham, concealment, evasion—the quality of greatness is in none of them.

There's the beginning of a policy for our science fiction. Let's print stories about people as real as our authors can make them. Let's deal honestly with their problems, their characters and motives—and be limited only by good taste.

Each age sets a line beyond which decency calls a halt. That line is in a different place today from its location ten years ago and ten years from now it will be in still a different place. But in a rough way your own good taste tells you what is acceptable. Let's see how it works out.

That slight gap in letters we mentioned in the last issue has now been closed—and how! I'd like to get them all in—they're a riot—but if we run out of space, bear with us, won't you?

MEMORIES
by Sgt. Edwin R. Corley

Dear Mr. Mines: While idly leafing through back issues of magazines I haven't had time to read yet, memories of the good old days came floating back. Remember the screwy letters that came rolling in? There was always one that began:

> Dere Sam: I am only 163 years old and this is the first time I ever wrote to a mag. Send me all the original drawings for the past fifty years, as I am starting an opium den and the walls are awful bare. Enclosed is 3c stamp.

Nostalgic, hey? And remember the one that went:

> Good eating, Snark: Rocketing from the farther reaches of Pluto, I went into free fall, disconnected the Geiger counter and broke out the latest ish of SS. Three BEMs peered anxiously over my shoulder as I lit my *calugite* pipe and turned frantically to Snavely's opus. . . .

But no issue would have been complete without the little gem that started:

> Dear Sam: Regarding Murgatroyd's stinking letter, I want to say that I have it on good authority that the Boojum was a Grulzak, so any references to Hubbard's story (SS, Aug., Page 31—53, 3 pr sox 1 shrt) have to be based on this assumption. . . .

This one's a little dated, but I'm sure you'll remember it:

> Dear Editor: *I remember Shimbashi!* Last summer, while mowing the lawn, I fell through an old un-used sewer. Stunned, I awoke in the arms of a 16-foot blonde. "I am Tia," she said, "of the race Giantus. Secretly, we rule your world, using your shaving mirrors as hypnotic projectors."

Still with me, Sam? Getting away from the wacky ones, there are always the earnest young idealists who begin:

> Dear Mr. Mines: Why can't we have less tripe like "Planet Ship X-14½" and more serious, mature stf like Heinlen, Bradbury, van Vogt. . . .

But the one that puts my heart up in my throat is the plain little one of about three paragraphs that just goes:

> Dear Sir: I've never read any science fiction, because I've always thought it was just "blood and thunder" pulp stories with a new twist. But after reading my first stf magazine, I'm happy to find I was wrong. You've got the tools of literiture in your hands. Keep up the good werk.

Maybe they can't spell, but those are the readers that keep the quarters rolling in to pay for the paper and stories, and we "fen" know it. More power to you, little man. Just keep reading and one of these days you'll be bitten by the letter-writing bug too.

Hope I haven't stepped on any corns with my

(Continued on page 131)

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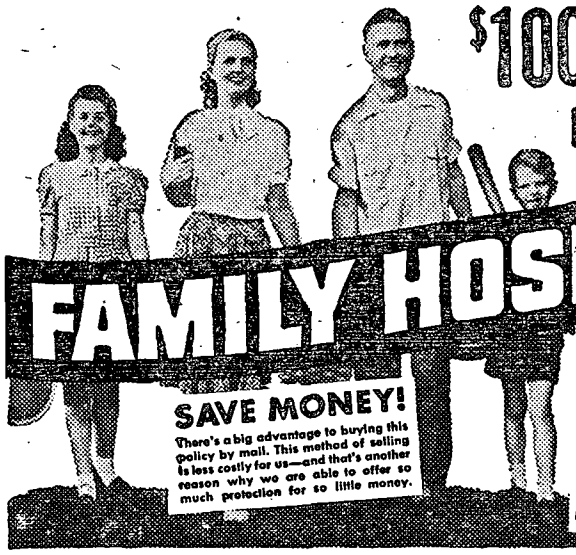

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The Actual Policy Will Come to You at Once Without Cost or Obligation

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Please rush the new Family Hospital Protection Plan Policy to me on 10 days Free Inspection. I understand that I am under no obligation.

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THE SERVICE LIFE FAMILY HOSPITAL PLAN

SERVICE LIFE INSURANCE COMPANY
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Hospital Department S-17, Omaha 2, Nebraska

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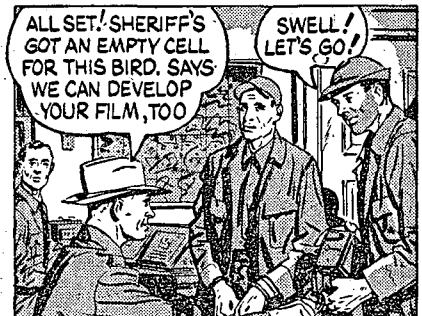
ROD TRAPPED THE POACHER AND THEN . . .

WHEN ROD BROWN, DEPUTY GAME WARDEN AND WILDLIFE PHOTOGRAPHER, RIGGED HIS FLASH CAMERA ON A STATE PRESERVE DEER TRAIL, HE LITTLE EXPECTED A POACHER TO SET IT OFF.

HIDING NEARBY, ROD SEES THE FLASH AND COMES TO RESET THE CAMERA, BUT THEN...



LATER AT STATE PARK HEADQUARTERS

WHAT A PICTURE! LET'S CALL IN THE REPORTERS
I'M A FINE-LOOKING SIGHT TO BE INTERVIEWED. HAVEN'T SHAVED SINCE FRIDAY
WE CAN FIX YOU UP WITH A RAZOR

THREE HOURS PASS

FOR FAST, CLEAN, GOOD-LOOKING SHAVES AT A SAVING, TRY THIN GILLETTES. NO OTHER BLADES IN THE LOW-PRICE FIELD ARE SO KEEN AND SO LONG LASTING. BECAUSE THEY'RE MADE TO FIT YOUR GILLETTE RAZOR PRECISELY, THIN GILLETTES PROTECT YOU FROM NICKS AND IRRITATION. ASK FOR THIN GILLETTES IN THE CONVENIENT TEN-BLADE PACKAGE
THIN Gillette 10 BLADES
10-25¢
4-10¢

TEN-BLADE PACKAGE HAS COMPARTMENT FOR USED BLADES

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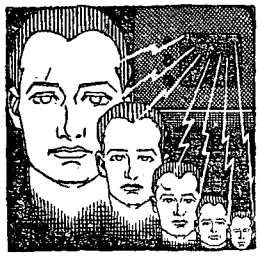
How's Your Voltage?

NEW FINDINGS POINT TO THE ELECTRICAL BASIS OF LIFE



ROBOTS come and go in science fiction, but we have yet to see a story in which a human being drove into a service station and had himself recharged electrically. Yet that day may not be as far off as you think. Every restaurant may have a recharger to give its patrons an ampere lift as well as a meal.

The theory that all life has an electrical basis has been with us for awhile. But it has been somewhat vaguely expressed and limited to certain demonstrable forms, such as measuring brain waves.

New experiments indicate, however, that it goes much further than that, and evidence is being piled up in laboratories all over the country. At Yale, Dr. Harold S. Burr has measured the electrical potential of a *kernel of corn,* the resulting reading on a galvanometer giving a rough prediction of the seed's sprouting ability and its full size at maturity.

At Pennsylvania State College, a group of researchers, working with the Army Signal Corps, demonstrated that magnets foul up a pigeon's "homing instinct" completely.

Similar magnetic fields set up in the rivers of British Columbia by the Canadian government were found to affect sharply the homing "instinct" of salmon. And electrical devices are known to attract fish and eels of many kinds.

Back at Yale, Dr. Miles and Dr. Beck of the Psychology Department have been trying to track down the mechanism of man's sense of smell and again have come up indications of electricity.

Man's (and presumably animals') ability to detect odors, they believe, is actually a "broadcast" by the nose of infra-red rays, with wave lengths running from 7.5 to 14 microns. Once the correct wave length for each odor is established, it will be the easiest thing in the world to broadcast any scent desired and the perfume industry will move into new fields.

Moving pictures and television broadcasts which will combine three-dimensional images with color and controlled scents will achieve an illusion of reality little short of life itself. Nor is olfactory stimulation the least important of these. The peculiar attribute of scent is that it brings back memories more effectively than almost any other type of stimulus. Thus cinema or television plays spiked with correct odors will make a sharper effect initially, remain in the memory longer and be more easily recalled than ever before.

Charles Kettering, General Motors' inventive genius, has been after the secret of photosynthesis for years, and many of his research teams have discovered some of the sun's secrets. They have made pure butter in the test tube, without the help of milk or cow in any way, utilizing sun power. And they believe that another ten years may see the whole fabulous secret revealed, of how chlorophyll turns the electrical energy of the sun into food. With that, man's fear that he will outgrow the food supplies of the planet are ended.

Even the search for a cancer cure has brushed against the electrical theory of life. Measurement of nerve fields has demonstrated that there is a considerable rise in voltage weeks before any other symptom of cancer appears. This has produced not only a cancer test, but a new and profitable area of research towards a cure.

These are tangible, material results. There are other lines of research, such as Dr. Rhine's experiments in ESP at Duke, which add to the general picture. Out of all these individual bits of research, going on independently in colleges, laboratories, even in basements and attics all over the country, will some day emerge the answer to the last and most baffling question of all—what is life?

—The Editor

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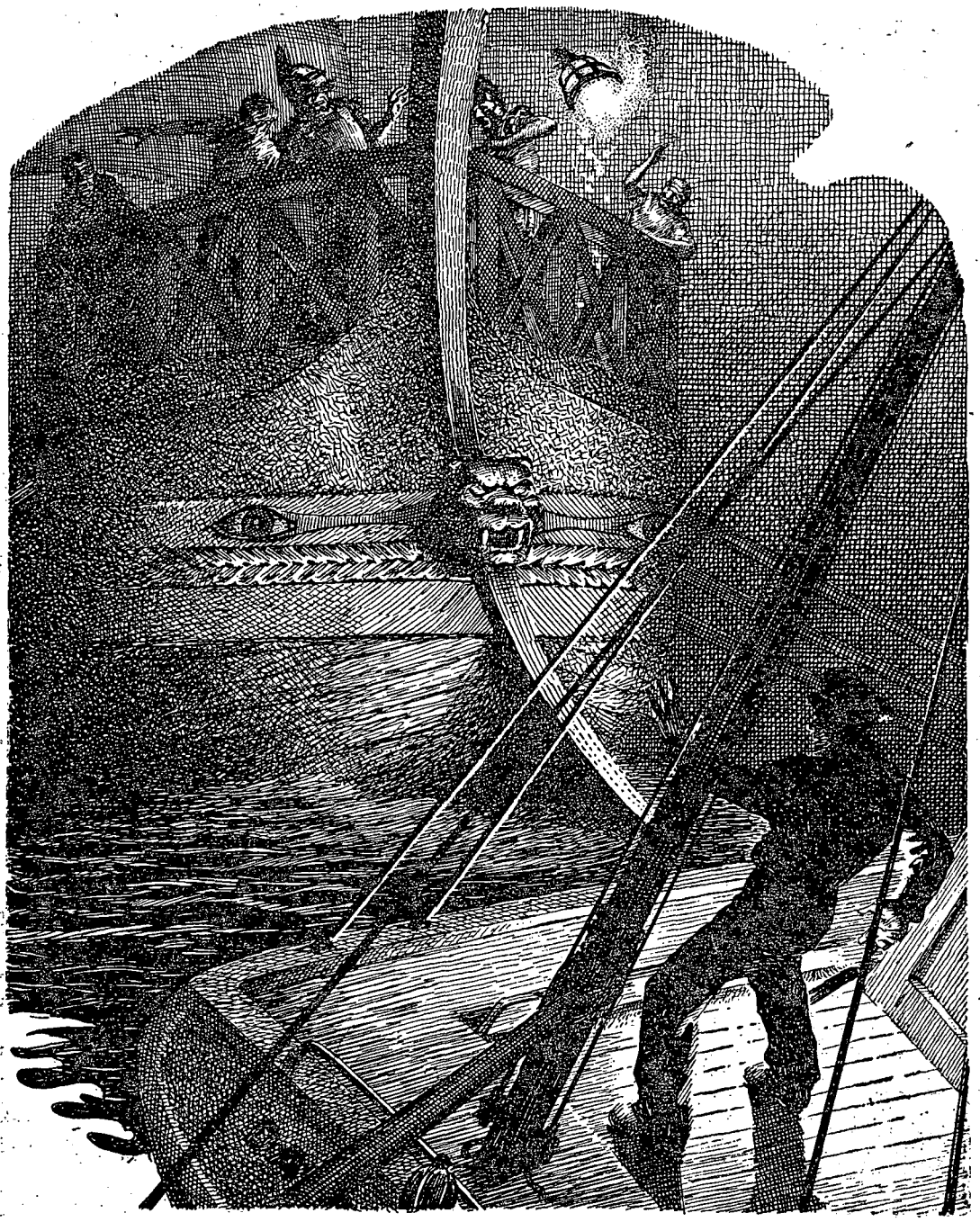
The GLORY



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THAT WAS

A Novel by L. SPRAGUE de CAMP

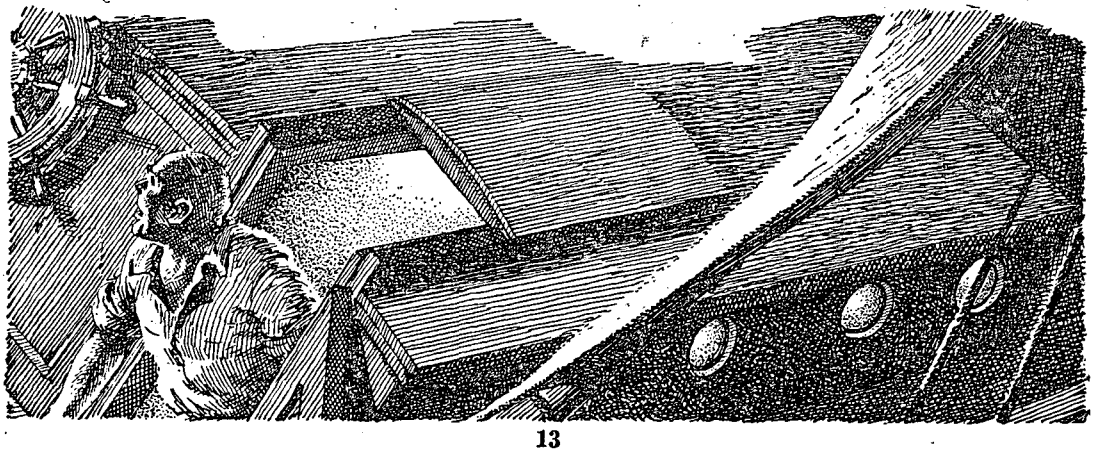
Bulnes, adventurer, and Flin, scholar . . . the search for a beautiful woman took these 27th Century men to Greece of the Golden Age!

I

THE little auxiliary yawl *Dagmar II* crept through a blanket of black fog towards Zea Harbor in Pirefs, the seaport of Athens. She pitched slowly over the smooth swells under sail alone, because her power-plant had been ruined when she ran through the force wall.

On the quarterdeck, the owner of the *Dagmar* (for whose mistress the yacht was named) strained his eyes into the dark—a tall lean fellow pushing forty, with reddish-brown stubble on his cheeks that would soon match his mousquetaire mustache. His face combined a swarthy complexion, a hint of a high-cheeked oriental look (from his Filipino grandmother) and wavy hair of an incongruous light-brown, receding at the temples.

Knut Bulnes strained his wits to imagine what he would find in the harbor, as if by sheer brain-power he could pierce the fog. Not, surely, the normal bustle of one of the eastern Mediterranean's busiest ports. Greece and its adjacent islands had been closed to the world for over a dozen years, ever since Rudolf Lenz, Prime Minister of the World Parliament, had allowed Vasil the Ninth, Emperor of the Earth,



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to erect the force-wall around that land for his own secret purposes.

Bulnes called down into the cabin: "We should see the Fretis light, but we don't."

"In this muck?" came the high voice of his shipmate. Wivem Flin was down in the cabin, spinning the generator-crank that powered the radar set.

In his endeavor to get into the Reserved Territory, partly to help Flin to hunt for his missing wife Thalia and partly in hopes of getting a sensational story for *Trends* (London), of which he was article editor (for even Lenz, with his near-dictatorial powers, had not yet succeeded in clamping a press censorship on Great Britain), Bulnes had run the *Dagmar II* up to the force wall on a night of storm. Then, when lightning had knocked out the circuit-breakers on the island of Antikythera (an occurence he had anticipated), he had rushed through.

But the electric power had come back on before they were completely through. Bulnes remembered the aurora-like glow that had reappeared around them, the crazy jerking of his muscles—and then, just as they were safely inside, no power in the ship. The electric surge had split the great barium-titanite crystal that powered the *Dagmar*. Hence the use of the hand-crank on the radar, and the stubble on Bulnes's face, for want of power for his electric razor.

He called to Flin again: "Take another spin on the crank, will you?"

The exasperating little man had to be pushed into anything in the nature of physical work. He had even had the infernal gall to give Bulnes unasked advice about his private life—telling him that he ought to marry Dagmar Mekrei. The missing Thalia, he said, had urged it, and she knew about such things. Flin taught dead languages at a boys' school in the country; Bulnes had come to know him when Flin sold him, for *Trends*, a series of articles on Roman ruins.

Flin's voice came out of the cabin: "There seem to be some small ships anchored . . . I should say about thirty meters at the largest. Docks and ship-sheds around the edge too. Bear lef—I mean to port."

"Are we through the entrance, please?"

"Just about . . . a little to starboard . . . I see more anchored ships on the screen . . . don't they show lights?"

"Not a light. Find me a clear space and we'll anchor."

At least, thought Bulnes, they should soon uncover the mystery of why they had not seen a single ship or aircraft since entering the Reserved Territory.

"Righto. Bear a point to port . . . little more . . ."

"You'll have to drop anchor by hand. Say when and I'll bring her about. Watch your head if we have to jibe."

After a while Flin's voice came: "Here you are!"

BULNES spun the wheel. The *Dagmar II* did a tight turn and luffed, sails flapping gently. Flin bounced out of the cabin and scrambled forward, almost falling over the side. Bulnes could see the diffused light of his headlamp and hear the rattle of the anchor-chain. The yacht drifted shoreward until stopped by the chain. Bulnes and Flin lowered the sails.

"Quietest place I ever saw," said Flin. "We ought to hear ships loading over in the Kantharos."

Bulnes yawned. "I hear somebody talking on shore, so the place can't be utterly deserted. Might as well make ourselves comfortable until morning. Hell, it's not yet midnight."

"Aren't we liable to be run down without lights?"

"I suppose so, but I don't know what to do about it."

"Why not take the bulbs out and put candles in their places?"

"Good!" said Bulnes, surprised to hear his companion come up with a sensible suggestion for once. "You take care of it; I want a look at the radar

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scope." He went below.

When the radar screen flashed into light he saw the outline of Zea Harbor surrounding them, with the anchored ships and the piers showing clearly. Though it looked different from the charts, Knut Bulnes was still sure he had not entered the Munihia Harbor by mistake.

The light on the screen was fading when movement caught his attention. He spun the crank again and threw the switch.

"Hey, Bil!" he called, cranking furiously. The generator whined.

Flin's face appeared. "What is it? I haven't got the starboard—"

murmur of voices, a ripple of water, a rhythmic thumping. He cupped his hands:

"Keep off!"

In the rising murmur he could not tell if he was answered. He called again, in Romaic. The noise became louder. He shouted again, then said to Flin: "Know where the signal flares are? Get some quick!"

The sounds grew louder yet. The unseen ship must contain many people all talking at once: an excursion-boat, perhaps. Somebody chanted above the general noice: *"Rhyppapai! Papai! Rhyppapai! Papai!"*

The approaching ship must now be

Gosh All Hemlock

IF PERIKLES the Athenian could come back to life and read our "histories" of the ancient Greece of his day, he'd probably laugh himself sick. But this is no more than you can expect after history has been written and rewritten, edited to suit the ideas of rulers and theologians, and generally batted around from pillar to post. Conscientious historians have longed for the power to go back and actually be present, with a stenographer, at some of the great moments of the past. Suppose you could be set down in the streets of Athens, could listen to Sokrates the Wise, Anaxagoras the astronomer, Euripedes the playwright—actually hear them utter the words that made the golden age of Greece so great. Would you be inspired—or disappointed?

That chance came to our heroes, a pair of modern men. And they made quite a thing of it—as you shall see.

—*The Editor*

"Kindly look at this!" Bulnes pointed to the object, unmistakably a ship moving through the harbor entrance toward them.

"Looks like a dashed centipede!" said Flin.

"Hurry with that other light, if you please, and if you hear 'em, tell 'em to keep off."

Flin hurried out again. Bulnes took one more spin, then snatched up a flashlight and went out on deck after him. Cocking his ears against the opaque dark he heard a medley of sounds: a

so close that her stem might appear any time. In the fog, higher than Bulnes's head, a light-spot grew to a hazy red ball.

"Here they are," panted Flin. "I had to hunt—"

"Get away! Scram! Keep off!" screamed Bulnes in Modern Greek, Italian, Spanish, and Arabic.

From the darkness a voice answered *"Ti?"* and followed this word with a rattle of syllables Bulnes could not make out, though it sounded not unlike his native Spanish. The *"Rhyppapai!*

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Papai!" grew louder, keeping time with the thump and splash as of many oars.

The blood-red ball became brighter. Bulnes snatched up one of the flares and ignited it with his cigarette-lighter.

The red ball became a fire-pot on the bow of a ship. Bulnes glimpsed a group of men around the fire-pot. Then the flare went off, just as something struck the *Dagmar II* under water with a sickening crunch.

THE yacht jerked. Bulnes, almost thrown overboard, dropped the flare to clutch for support, just as the magenta flame shot out. The flare fell into the water and was quenched with a sizzle. The post or tripod on the strange ship toppled forward, spilling coals over the bow, and the men around it grabbed at each other and at the rail. The *"Rhyppapai!"* stopped.

"You bustards!" screamed Bulnes. *"Cabrones!"*

Shouts came from the other ship, and water swirled as it began to back away.

Bulnes thrust his head into the cabin. By the light of his headlamp he could see that the floor-boards were already wet, and an ominous gurgle from below told the rest of the tale. Bulnes snatched the sail-winch crank from its bracket and rushed out again.

"Wiyem!" he shouted. "We're filling! Pull up the anchor, please."

Bulnes cranked the sail-winches furiously, taking the jibs first so that the faint air filled these and swung the yacht's bow shoreward. Water was sloshing over the duckboards by the time the sails were up and the ship sliding toward shore.

"She moves awfully slowly," said Flin.

"Not much wind, and she's low in the water."

Fuming, Bulnes searched the fog for signs of shore. The water was up to his ankles.

"Did you see what I saw?" said Flin.

"You mean that ship, like some antique out of a history-book?"

"More than that. It was a Classical trireme."

"I thought so. Somebody must be making a movie."

"Could be," said Flin dubiously.

"What holed us? The bow of that thing was nowhere near the *Dagmar*."

"If it was a real trireme it would have a ram sticking out just below the surface of the water."

"What were those people talking? They didn't seem to understand any of the Mediterranean languages."

"Dashed if I know. Is that something ahead?"

Dark irregularities appeared in the fog forward. The sounds from the galley had sunk to a mere murmur. Bulnes said: "Drop the mainsail. This looks like a wharf."

The water was up to his calves. The wharf solidified, but a couple of small ships tied up to it occupied all the available space.

Bulnes said: "She's going down any minute. As soon as we touch those ships, jump on to them."

THE *Dagmar II* brushed gently alongside the nearest ship, a faint blur of curved lines in the blackness. Bulnes released the wheel, took two splashing steps, and leaped for the rail. The *Dagmar II*, as if this latest jar had upset a precarious balance, shuddered and slid below the surface of the bay. The candle-stubs in the riding-lights were snuffed out with tiny hisses, like the spitting of a frightened kitten.

Bulnes swung himself over the rail of the other ship, then turned as Flin said: "Help me, Knut! I'm stuck!"

Bulnes found his companion hanging on to the rail with his hands while his feet thrashed the water. He hauled the plump schoolteacher over the rail.

"Ouch!" said Flin. "You needn't be so blasted rough, you know. Oh, dear, my good clothes and passport and everything!"

"Clothes! How about my ship?"

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"She's insured, isn't she?"

"Yes, but—I loved that little boat."

"Rotten luck, but I should think she could be raised."

"There is that." Bulnes blew his nose and straightened his lip. The *Dagmar* was one of the few things in the world he was sentimental about.

"What worries me more," said Flin, "is that this thing we're on is of antique design too. Just put your hand on these timbers; you can feel the adze-marks."

"We'll worry about that in the morning. Come on; got your money?"

"Yes, thank goodness. That and our clothes and my pocket radio and your case-knife are about our only worldly goods at the moment."

Bulnes felt his way to the opposite side of the ship and climbed over the rail to the pier. He found himself on a flat stone-paved surface. Ahead, low structures loomed. Bulnes led Flin a step at a time across the wharf until his groping hand found a wall, then along the wall to a corner.

The darkness lay thick ahead. Creeping along this street away from the waterfront they came to another intersection. A ruddiness in the fog to the right suggested a fire, and voices came from that direction.

"Shall we try 'em?" said Bulnes.

"I suppose we might as well."

II

THEY walked in the direction of the light, which underwent the same transformation that had occurred when the trireme rammed them. The ruddiness solidified into a red globe, like a planetary nebula contracting into a star. The red ball in turn became a wood-fire crackling in an iron cage atop a stone pillar in the middle of an intersection.

Bulnes saw people: four men squatting or kneeling in a circle, looking inward at the ground, while two others stood behind them watching. At the sound of footsteps they looked around.

PERIKLES

All had beards and were dressed in shapeless pieces of cloth wrapped around their persons. Bare arms and legs protruded from these sartorial bundles. They stank powerfully of garlic, onions, and unwashed human hide.

As the nearest man, who had his back to them, swiveled around on his heels, Bulnes caught sight of a little group of white objects on the ground. He had evidently interrupted a crap-game.

"*Pos ise?*" he said in Reformed Romaic, the official language of twenty-seventh-century Greece.

The men looked at one another. One made an unintelligible remark. Although the language sounded European, it had a curious singsong quality like the polytonic languages of the Far East.

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Bulnes repeated his greeting. Again the interchange of syllables in the unknown tongue, and a laugh. Six pairs of dark eyes were focussed on Bulnes with no very encouraging expression.

Beside him Flin burst out: "Knut! I'll swear they're talking *Classical* Greek!"

"*Caray!* Suppose you take over, then."

"I don't know . . . I'll try, but we don't learn to use the stuff colloquially in school, you know." Flin addressed the men:

"*Chaire!*"

All the men were now up. The nearest was shorter than the others but very broad of chest and thick of biceps. "*Chaire,*" repeated this one, his pitch sliding up and down on the first syllable.

"*Pos echeis?*" said Flin, giving the Classical equivalent of Bulnes's greeting.

"*Agathon,*" grinned the stocky man. More remarks flew among the six. Bulnes asked:

"What are they saying?"

"Can't quite make out, but I jolly well don't like it. I'll ask the way to an inn."

Flin began piecing together a sentence, a word at a time, as if he were assembling a puzzle. Bulnes noted that one of the men casually picked up a club that he had left lying on the ground. This was going to be like that time in Bombay. He glanced at the sheath-knife at his own waist. When Flin had finished his sentence, Bulnes murmured: "Got a knife in your pocket?"

"Y-yes, but . . ."

"Get your hand on it, please. If they jump us, try to get your back to the pillar."

Bulnes and Flin stood about as far from the pillar as the strange sextet, who had been playing their game at some distance from its base because the fire did not illuminate the ground directly below itself. Flin started his sentence again, but the six seemed not to be paying attention. Instead they leaned toward the stocky one, listening to the words he muttered.

Bulnes quietly unsnapped the retaining-loop that held the upper end of his knife-handle, then started to peel off his greasy work-jacket. He had it partly off when the burly man said something that sounded as if it began with "happy teeth."

At the same time that man's fist came out of his swathings with a knife.

AS THE six, spreading out into a crescent with the horns forward, advanced with knives and cudgels, Flin uttered a mouse-like noise and ducked behind Knut Bulnes.

Bulnes took a step forward and aimed a terrific kick at the crotch of the stocky leader. As his rope-soled espadrille sank home, the stout man fell to his hands and knees with a howl that hurt Bulnes's eardrums.

By this time Bulnes had his jacket off. With a jerk he coiled it around his left forearm, at the same time drawing his case-knife with his other hand. As one of the men stepped forward, bringing down a knife-bearing fist in an overhand stab, Bulnes caught the point of the knife in the jacket. With an underhand outward thrust he stabbed the man in the solar plexus. The man gulped and fell.

Then Bulnes had his back to the pillar, his eyes flicking from man to man. He was dimly aware of Wiyem Flin beside him making feints with a pocket-knife.

Now that two of their comrades were down, the four remaining attackers seemed somehow to have lost their *élan.* They danced in and out, arms upraised for a stab or a blow, crying: "*Epitithete! Sphazete autous!*" but not closing.

Bulnes caught another blow on his rolled-up jacket. Although his left arm was beginning to feel sore, each time they came in he drove them back with

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feints and thrusts. His task was lightened by the fact that these *ladrónes* seemed not to know any way of using a dagger except the easily-blocked overhand stab. The stout man Bulnes had kicked was now getting up.

A sound beside him drew the attention of Bulnes in time to see Wiyem Flin, having taken a cudgel-blow on the pate, slide limply to the ground. Now Bulnes knew there was no chance for him, as one man, be he never so agile, cannot face in three directions at once . . .

Another sound pierced the foggy night: a *whish* of cloven air concluded by the sharp report of wood striking a human cranium. The burly man whom Bulnes had kicked in the belly staggered forward, plowing through the semicircle of his own people with head down as if to butt Bulnes in the midriff.

As the man came near, Bulnes brought his fist up in an underhand jab, sinking his knife-blade into the fellow's throat. At the same time the noise from beyond the circle was heard again: *whsht-thuck! whsht-thuck!* together with a hoarse yell.

The stoutish man, spraying blood from his throat-wound, collapsed across the body of Flin, while Bulnes sighted another figure leaping about behind his assailants, beating them over their heads with a stick or staff and shouting. The remaining attackers turned in confusion to see who was taking them in the rear. Then the whole lot were gone save for the dwindling slap of their feet on the dirt.

As his rescuer came forward into the firelight, Bulnes saw a stocky bearded man wearing what first looked like an outfit of modern working-clothes. However, the firelight soon showed profound differences: trousers tucked into soft-leather boots; a jacket of coarse material whose hem dipped to a low point in front and which was held closed by a wide belt, without benefit of buttons. And on his head he wore a kind of gnomish felt helmet or cap that covered his ears and rose to a tall point, his long hair escaping from under its lower edge. His weapon was an unstrung bow, and from his belt a quiverful of arrows hung over one hip.

"Chaire!" said the newcomer, and followed the salutation with a string of gibberish.

Bulnes shook his head and replied in the modern Greek *dimodiki:* "Thanks, but who are you? Where are we?"

More unintelligible sounds.

"Is this," (Bulnes waved an arm) "Pirefs?"

Light dawned on the stranger's face. *"Esti ho Peiraieus!"* he said, giving the name of the port its full Classical form, and then went off into another spate of chatter.

BULNES turned to succor Flin, whose balding head was rising by slow bobbles out of the cone of darkness around the base of the pillar. Flin's uncertain voice came: *"Ei Skythotoxotes?"*

"Pany men oun," replied the man. He and Flin spoke, the former swiftly, Flin more slowly. Flin turned to Bulnes: "He's a copper. One of the corps of so-called Scythian archers, slave-policemen owned by the city of Athens in ancient times. Where the deuce are my glasses?"

"How'd he happen to be here so opportunely?"

"His present duty is that of night guard in the Arsenal of Philon, and he heard the racket. He wants to know what part of Greece you come from; says you have the strangest accent he ever heard."

"No use telling him I'm from three thousand years in the future, if I am. Is that really Classical Greek you're chattering?"

"Absolutely, though he seems to have a terrific accent himself . . . ah, here they are!" Flin had found his glasses.

The archer spoke. Flin translated: "He says we shall have to come with

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him to the office of his superior here in the Peiraieus. We shall be held there for the rest of the night, and tomorrow we shall be taken up to Athens for a hearing before the Polemarchos."

"Who's he?"

"The chap who presides over criminal cases involving foreigners."

Bulnes said: "Whatever weird sort of business is going on, I don't care to be caught up in the official gears. Ask him who these stiffs are, if you please."

"He says the fat one is a notorious local gangster, a lieutenant of someone called Phaleas."

"Then even he should be able to see we're guilty of no crime. Why can't we bribe him to help us drop the corpses in the harbor and let us go?"

"But—but—"

"If this lad's a slave they probably don't pay him anything, so he's used to grafting a bit in order to enjoy some of the comforts of life. Go ahead, ask him."

Flint put his question and reported: "He won't say yes or no. It depends on the amount, I suspect."

"What's the purchasing power of our coins?"

"Rather high. One should be able to live comfortably for a month on a modern half-kraun."

BULNES dug into the change-pocket of his dungarees and examined his change by the firelight. He handed Flin a frank or twenty-pen piece and said: "Try this."

There followed a lengthy palaver. At last the archer grinned and popped the coin into his mouth. Flin said: "I explained it's a Tartessian drachme. We're Tartessians."

"What are Tartessians, if you please?"

"And you a Spaniard! Tartessos was a famous ancient city that once flourished near Cadiz. Since the Tartessians were considered a rich and civilized people, I thought passing ourselves off as such would give us prestige."

The archer leaned his bow-stave against the pillar, knelt, and began to strip the bodies.

"What's he doing?" said Bulnes.

"He says that, confidentially, he sells their clothes and effects. If we don't tell on him, he won't tell on us."

"What does he expect to get for them?"

"Since they were rather well worn to begin with, and now have got knife-holes and bloodstains, he doubts he can get a couple of oboloi apiece."

"How much was an obolos?"

"About two pens. There are a couple!"

The archer had thrust a finger into the mouth of one of the corpses and dug out a couple of plump little coins about as big around as a pencil. After a similar investigation of the other cadaver he stood up with the bundle of garments over his arm, picked up his bow, and with his other hand grasped the ankle of the gang-leader's corpse. He spoke.

Flin said: "He wants *us* to help him drag these bodies to the waterfront!"

"What's wrong with that? Take the other end of the big stiff and I'll manage the little one myself."

"*Touch* them? I—I can't!" bleated Flin.

"*Su madre!*" roared Bulnes, then got control of himself. "My dear old man, please pull yourself together, unless you want to get your fool throat cut."

III

THEY set off into the darkness, dragging the bodies through the mud. Bulnes said: "He agrees we're at Pirefs, but we might try to find out *when*."

"I'll ask him . . . he says it's the archonship of Apseudes."

"When was that? Or perhaps I should say when *is* it?"

"Blessed if I know."

Bulnes, hauling on the wrists of his corpse, frowned into the darkness. "Either we've gone back in time, the

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Bulnes saw Kleon, his head gone, fall backwards. . . .

way they do in those fanciful stories, or somebody's staging a colossal hoax. You might ask him about places to sleep."

"He says there's an inn for sailors, but it's full of bed-bugs."

"Hm. And I suppose we shall be either swindled by the inn-keeper or murdered by another gang of cut-throats . . ."

They came to a pavement ending in a sea-wall, beyond which Bulnes saw the glimmer of water. The lap and gurgle of waves came from below.

"Ballete!" said the archer. Bulnes heaved on his corpse, and the naked body splashed into the water. The other followed.

Bulnes thought fast. Unless prevented, the archer would now amble off into the night, leaving him and Flin to start their hunt for shelter all over again. He said: "Let's walk him back to his arsenal. What's his name?"

"Triballos. I've told him you're Bouleus and I'm Philon."

Bulnes thought that Flin had shown more presence of mind than one would have expected of him. The Scythian would have to be used with care. On one hand the man was a link to this strange world they had blundered into. On the other, Triballos, though technically a slave, was an official, and something told Bulnes that contact with officials, real or pretended, was to be avoided by a pair of illegal visitors. Moreover, whatever the true explanation of this colossal anachronism, he could see that the salvaging of the yawl, as a preliminary to a quiet departure, was apt to present terrific complications.

Another formless fiery glow appeared in the fog. As Bulnes came closer he saw it was made by a torch in a wall-bracket on the front of a large building.

Bulnes fished out his daim and handed it to Flin, saying: "Kindly tell him we'll give him this for those costumes and a lodging for the night in his arsenal."

"What d'you want with those rags?"

"You'll see. Tell him, please."

When the offer had been translated the archer looked at the coin, weighed it in his palm, and finally broke into a grin.

"He says all right," said Flin.

THE Scyth pushed open one of the two big doors, took the torch from its bracket, and led the travellers inside. The building proved long and relatively narrow. They stood at one end of a central nave bounded by two rows of pillars. A stone ballustrade connected the pillars of each row, with a bronze lattice-work gate in each intercolumnation. On the sides of the building, beyond the columns, Bulnes could see the spidery shapes of frames on which sails were stretched, and piles of spars, oars, and timbers.

"Entauthoi!" said the archer, leaning his bow against the ballustrade to free one arm. He opened one of the gates and led the visitors to a stair that twisted up to the gallery overhead. Here the flicker of the torch showed shelves along the outer wall of the building (interrupted at intervals by windows) on which were piled coils of rope. Thicker hawsers were coiled on the floor. Triballos spoke.

"He says," said Flin, "we can sleep on the rope, but we shall have to be up and out before dawn so as not to get him into trouble."

Bulnes watched as the torch receded down the stairs, throwing back distorted shadows.

"What's your opinion," he asked Flin, "about this alleged ancient Greece? Have we slipped back in time, or is it all an act? Or are we dreaming or dead?"

"I think we're really back in ancient Attika."

"Why, my dear sir?"

"The little details. It'd be fantastic to put on such an act."

"You think the Emp has some sort of time-machine that works inside his force-wall, so he can run history over like a film?"

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"Something like that."

"Won't work, comrade."

"Why not?" said Flin.

"It involves a paradox. The acts we commit in the ancient Greece would affect all subsequent history. Therefore when our own century comes around we shall never be born as and when we were, so we shan't exist to go back to ancient Greece to commit those acts."

"We haven't affected history yet."

"We've killed two men, fought four others, and bribed still another."

"But they're not persons of importance!"

"Still, I can imagine the effect of these acts spreading out like ripples until they affect the entire fabric of history."

Flin said: "Well then, if we'd affected history we should have vanished like a puff of smoke, I suppose. And since we haven't vanished, it's evident your paradox won't hold water."

"If you assume that this *is* ancient Attika. I should say it were evident, rather, that we aren't back in time. By the way, have you any more exact idea of when we are? 'Ancient Greece' covers a lot of centuries."

"Mmm," said Flin. "While I don't know when Apseudes was archon, I think this ruddy building was built in the later fifth century B. C. Therefore we can't be earlier than that. And from the pronunciation I should guess it wasn't much later than that—later fifth—either, though I haven't yet spoken to enough people to be sure."

"When does that put us? At the time of the Persian invasions?"

"No, later. The age of Perikles and the Peloponnesian War, sometimes called the Golden Age of Greece. I'm morally certain it's the real thing, too."

"I wouldn't jump to conclusions yet," Bulnes said sleepily. "Just because we find a section of Pirefs put back into its Periklean condition, and see a few characters flitting about in bedspreads, we shouldn't conclude that all Greece has been likewise transformed." He yawned. "In the morning we can go out and ask anybody if he's seen Aristotle."

SEVERAL factors conspired to awaken Knut Bulnes well before the sunrise of which Triballos had warned him: the song of the birds, the sound of voices without, the snores of Wiyem Flin, and the unyielding nature of the pile of rope that Bulnes had made his bed.

Giving up the struggle for sleep, Bulnes sat up rubbing his itchy eyes. Flin still lay asleep, a large lump showing in the pre-dawn light through the sparse hair that thinly veiled his pink scalp.

Bulnes stood up and went to the nearest window: a simple rectangular hole in the wall provided with a crude wooden shutter, now left wide open. The immediate neighborhood seemed to be filled with buildings not at all like gracefully columnated Greek temples: crudely plain one-story brick structures without any exterior windows or decorations.

The owners of two of the voices that had wakened him came in sight: a pair of young women in long draped coverings, each balancing a large jar on her shoulder. Slave-girls fetching the day's household water from the nearest public fountain, thought Bulnes. If a fake, it was a most convincing one.

As the girls passed out of sight a man hurried in the other direction bearing a bundle upon his shoulder. His single garment was merely an oversized sack with holes for his arms and his head. In the quarter-hour that followed others appeared. Bulnes watched fascinated until the waxing light warned him that he would do well to waken Flin.

Flin, shaken, muttered: "Nex' watch already? Where are my oilskins . . . oh, goodness gracious, then it wasn't just a bad dream of being back in ancient Greece!"

He bounced up from his coil of rope

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and hurried to the window. Bulnes remarked:

"You've been talking about how you'd love to step back into ancient Attika, my dear Bil, so now's your chance. I fear, however, we shall be conspicuous in dungarees and yachting-caps."

"You mean to wear those?" Flin indicated the heap of native garments salvaged from the casualties of the night before.

"Yes," said Bulnes. "How the devil d'you put 'em on?"

"We'd better look them over for—ah—parasites first."

They dragged the garments to the window, shook them, and began inspecting. Bulnes said: "Hell, this thing's nothing but a big rectangle of cloth."

"Of course. That's a Doric chiton. Ah, got one!"

"Good for you. How d'you wear it?"

"Fold it so and wrap it around you under the armpits. These safety-pins fasten it together over both shoulders and along the open side. If you'll take off your clothes I'll drape you."

"I feel like the model of some damned coutourier," said Bulnes, his skin making goose-pimples in the cool of the morning. "Ouch!"

"Sorry, didn't mean to prick you. There!"

Bulnes took a few experimental steps. "Draftiest damned thing I ever wore. Now it's your turn, dear comrade. . . . what are the remaining pieces? The big ones?"

"Himatia or cloaks. You drape one around yourself any way you like."

Bulnes experimented with the blanketlike rectangle of cloth. "Shouldn't there be belts to go around these chemises?"

"I suppose so, but I don't see any. Perhaps they got lost in the dark."

"Then we'll steal a little of the Athenian navy's cordage," said Bulnes, making for a pile of light rope with his knife.

"What about our things?"

"You can stuff your watch and pocket-knife into your wallet and hang your wallet over your belt, I suppose. Our own clothes we shall have to wad up and hide here."

Flin looked out the window. "I say, the fog's gone and the sun'll be up any minute."

"We shall have to go then." Bulnes tried on the larger of the two pairs of sandals that had belonged to the dead men.

"And start hunting for Thalia?"

"Not so fast! We don't even know she's here yet. We want to know just what we've gotten into first. Also we shall have to secure a supply of meals, and you'll have to teach me enough Classical Greek to get along on."

Flin rested his chain in his hand, then snatched away the hand. "We can't even shave—though this seems to be one of the bearded periods. At that we shall be conspicuous in these whiskers." He stroked his mustache and goatee.

"A few more shaveless days'll fix that. Where can we get our money changed?"

Flin frowned in concentration. "There was a building here called the Deigma where the bankers had tables. They'll probably try to swindle us."

"When would they be open for business?"

"Around dawn. Nearly everything starts at that time."

Bulnes shuddered.

IV

THE streets were filling fast, not only with men in the garb of ancient Greece, but also with others: a few Negroes, some slender shaven men whom Flin identified as Egyptians, bearded ones in jerseys and kilts who he said were Phoenicians, and various others. From time to time Bulnes and Flin were forced to drop their dignity to dodge a burden-beast, a cart, or the contents of a slop-pail.

They climbed partway up to hill of the Munibia (or Mounychia as Flin

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called it) near the arsenal, until their street petered out. Thence they saw the checker-board plan of the Peiraieus stretching off to the southwest. In the other direction the Long Walls extended several miles inland towards Athens proper. The sun was just rising over the oak-clad swell of Mount Hymettos, though the city lay still in shadow. As the sunlight compassed Mount Aigaleos to the north and crept eastward across the valley, something gleamed over distant Athens.

Flin burst out: "It's the helmet of the Athenë of Pheidias—the so-called Athenë Promachos—on the Akropolis! They said you could see it from here. This *must* be real!"

"What's that, a statue?"

"A big one, ten meters tall. I say, this is simply wonderful!"

When Flin had feasted his eyes they walked back down the hill towards the Kantharos Harbor, passing an open space in which stood a number of statues and other monuments, among which hucksters shouted their wares. The thickening crowd was almost entirely male. Nobody paid Bulnes and Flin any attention.

"Doesn't it stink to high heaven?" said Flin.

Soon they found the Deigma: a huge covered colonnade full of noisy humanity. The garlic stench was almost overpowering.

One section of the Deigma was devoted to banks. Each bank comprised a large table at which sat the banker, surrounded by his slaves, his cash-boxes, and his rolls of papyrus accounts. In front of most of these tables a group of customers had lined up for business.

"How much change have you?" inquired Bulnes.

Flin counted. "Three frañks, four daims, one five-pen, six pens, three half-pens."

"Take a frañk and try three or four of these fellows to see who'll give us the best price."

"Dash it all, I hate haggling," grumbled Flin, but lined up before the first banker's table.

By the time he had reached the third lineup, Flin was complaining about his feet. Even Bulnes admitted feeling a little faint from hunger and from the waves of garlic odor.

"Just this once," he said, "and we'll decide which to deal with . . ."

"Hey!" said a third voice in English. "Are you the guys who showed up in the Peiraieus last night in civilized clothes and was attacked by Phaleas' gang?"

BULNES and Flin turned. There stood a muscular young man with a round snub-nosed innocent-looking face, clad like their rescuer of the previous night in coat, pants, and pointed cap, and leaning on the bow of a Scythian archer.

"Yes," said Bulnes. "Who are you, my dear sir?"

The youth advanced with hand outstretched. "My name's Diksen, Roi Diksen, from Yonkers. The Gricks calls me Pardokas."

Bulnes and Flin identified themselves, the latter adding: "What are Yonkers?"

"A town in the U. S. A. You guys English?"

Bulnes said: "Flin is; I am by adoption only."

"Where'd you come from originally, huh?"

"I'm technically Spanish, though by descent I'm a little of everything."

"You talk kind of like an American."

"I went to school there. How'd you hear about us?"

"Triballos told me, so I came down from Athens to find you."

"How'd you get off from duty?"

"This is my off-time; I'm on night patrol work. What you two up to? Changing your dough into this Grick stuff?"

"Yes," said Bulnes.

"When you get done, ain't there some place we can talk?"

"How about a place to eat? We

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haven't had breakfast, and it must be nearly noon."

The young man's face took on a look of disgust. "A-a-agh, these Gricks don't know nothing about real breakfast. They stick a hunk of bread in their lousy wine and call that a meal. But you guys want lunch. Okay, I know a joint."

Flin had reached the head of his line. Since this banker offered a rate of exchange a shade over those of the preceding two, Flin and Bulnes disposed of all their silver and copper.

"Lead on," said Bulnes to Roi Diksen.

THE "Scythian" conducted them out of the Deigma. The spring day had turned clear and cloudless. Diksen stopped at the Agora and directed his companions to buy what they wanted for lunch: ". . . on account of these joints'll cook grub for you but they don't carry it themselves; you gotta bring it with you."

They turned in at an inn where they sat on benches facing each other across an elongated table.

"At least," said Bulnes, "it only stinks to low heaven here."

The meal that Diksen had assembled comprised a huge piece of bread, a bunch of onions swimming in oil, and a mug of wine. Bulnes tasted the wine.

"Phew!" he said. "Essence of pinecones!"

"You get used to it," said Diksen, "like you get used to the way they soak everything in olive-oil. O Kallingos!" He spoke to the proprietor in broken Greek and handed him the onions.

Bulnes said: "Now, Mr. Diksen, what's your story?"

"Well, it's like this, see? I save up the dough I get working for Kaplen's Hardware Store in Yonkers so I can take me a trip to Europe on my vacation. My girl thinks I need Culture. Anyway, everything goes fine till I get to Beograd. I'm walking through that big cathedral with the other trippers listening to the guide spout ancient history when everything goes black and I wake up at sea."

"What sea?" asked Bulnes.

"Dunno exactly; somewheres north of here. I'm in this boat with chains on my wrists and ankles, see, and a lot of other poor devils with me. We're in a kind of a pen at the bow, and the rest of the ship's full of guys pulling on long oars. I ask the nearest one what gives, but we don't understand each other's languages. These Gricks is all pretty ignorant; there ain't a one of 'em speaks English or ever heard of the Dodgers."

"Dodgers?" murmured Flin wonderingly.

Diksen continued: "At night the sailors steer the boat into shore and run the bow on the beach so they can get out to stretch and sleep, but they leave us in the boat with a couple of guys with spears to see we don't try nothing. After a coupla days we come to the Peiraieus. I'm all the time waiting to wake up from this horrible dream, but I don't. They take us to a place where they sell slaves; nobody told me but I figured it out. They take off our clothes and make us stand on the block like in the movies while guys bid for us.

"When my turn comes I stand up feeling kinda funny on account of there's a coupla broads watching, but these Gricks is all nudists, see, and don't make no never-mind. The auctioneer pokes me and hollers to look see how strong I am. He even raps me on the silver plate I got in my head on account of I was in an automobile accident a coupla years ago. I don't like it, but what can I do about it?

"By and by a jerk comes up and talks to the auctioneer and then asks me something. I don't get it, so he does sign-language of shooting a bow and arrow. I never shot no bows and arrows since I was six, so I shake my head. But since that means 'yes' among the Gricks, the jerk thinks I can shoot. So he goes into a huddle with the auc-

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tioneer, and next I know me and two other guys is being marched all the way to the police barracks in Athens.

"When I get onto the language a little I find out the jerk is a police commissioner sent down to buy three new cops for the force. Good thing he thought I said 'yes' because if he hadn't I'd have prob'ly been sent to the silver-mines at Laureion and worked to death.

"The first days is rugged on account of the old-timers put us through the jumps. I make like I don't mind on account of I know if I blow my top and slug one of these bustards they'll beat me to a bloody pulp. All the time I'm trying to pick up a little Grick. Geez, I hate languages! Anyway, when I catch on to what kind of screwy outfit this is, I figure I better learn to shoot quick or it's the silver-mines for me. So I watch the boys practicing on the archery-range, and when everybody's asleep after lunch I sneak out and shoot. Since then I been trained and put on regular patrol duty. As slavery it ain't too bad, though you got to watch yourself, specially in the barracks. I never seen such a damn bunch of swishes and perverts in my life, and the Gricks is the worst. So that's my story. I musta been here a year now. What's yours, gents?"

V

IT OCCURRED to Bulnes that if the young man were not what he seemed—if he were really an agent of those who managed this extraordinary business—he already knew enough about the two newcomers to cause them trouble. If, on the other hand, he were kosher, there was no reason to hold out on him.

Bulnes accordingly told their story: How Flin's wife had disappeared years before; how Dagmar's friend Kaal Beiker had passed on to Bulnes a rumor that the Emperor's secret police were kidnapping all expatriate Greeks like Thalia Flin and sending them back to the Reserved Area; how he and Flin had put two and two together and had resolved on a desperate gamble in the hope of rescuing Thalia and exposing the Emperor's mysterious machinations.

Flin added his bit of gossip: "I was talking to a colleague named Djounz, Diksen—Maksel Djounz, the historian—who knows a chap named Ogust Adler, the curator of the Dresden Museum. D'you know those caves or salt-mines or whatever they are in Saxony?"

"Uh-huh, I guess so," said Diksen vaguely.

"Some years ago, Djounz says, Adler got orders from His Majesty down the chain of command to store some building-blocks in these caves. The blocks proved to be pieces of building-stone and marble—slabs, drums, every shape—all carefully crated and numbered. Train-loads of the things, enough to build a city. Took Ogust nearly a year to store them. A couple of the crates broke in handling and he saw the blocks, and says one bore a Classical inscription. It's as if the Emp had dismantled all the ancient ruins in Greece and shipped the pieces to Saxony for storage."

"You know," said Diksen solemnly, "there's something funny about this whole damn setup."

"The prize understatement of the year. Go on."

"I mean, what the hell *is* this? Looks like we been dumped back in one of them ancient times they used to tell us about in school. You know, Napoleon and that sort of crap. I never paid no attention to it, but maybe now I shoulda. Say, would George Washington be alive now?"

"No," said Bulnes.

"Oh. But what I wanna know is, what's the deal? The gimmick? They can't really put us back in some other time. It ain't logical."

"Precisely what we've been trying to figure out," said Bulnes. "Do you know of any other cases like ours?"

"Well, one of the boys on the force

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was telling about another guy, a few months ago, who showed up in modern clothes. I didn't see him myself, but they say he got sent to Laureion."

Bulnes finished his last onion. At least now he'd stink like all the others. "What do we do next?" he asked.

"Well, us modern men got to stick together, see? I thought maybe I'd get next to some guy who knows what it's all about. And how can we get the hell out of here?"

"Why?" said Flin. "Don't you like it?"

Diksen gave a sharp howl that caused the other customers to look around. "Like it! My God, you just try being a slave and see how you like it!"

"Suppose you were a free man. Would you like Athens then?"

"Hell no!" said Diksen. "You can keep your pretty statues; I'll take flush toilets and glass windows and electric lights. There ain't nothing in this whole damn place we'd call necessary for human comfort, even in the rich citizens' houses. Living here's like—like camping out without no modern camping equipment, see? Give me good old Yonkers! Look, professor, you gotta get me back! You gotta, before I go nuts!"

BULNES said: "We'll try. We too have been wondering whether this was the real ancient Greece or a modern imitation."

"How can you tell?" said Diksen. "I never studied no history."

"For one thing, assuming time-travel is really involved, we don't know whether we're back in the whole ancient world or only a part of it."

"Come again, Mr. Bulnes?"

"How shall I explain it . . . Suppose we started walking north from here; we should pass through Boiotia and Thessalia and so on. Now in the modern world there's a force-wall around Greece and adjacent areas, which the Emp set up to keep people out while he performed his experiments. Do you follow me so far?"

"Yeah, I guess so."

"Well then, in walking away from here should we eventually come to the force-wall again, the same one we penetrated on our way in, or should we just find more and more of the ancient world no matter how far we went?"

Diksen scratched his head. "Geez, I dunno. I couldn't start on no hike like that, on account of the epheboi watch the borders to see no runaway slave don't sneak through."

Flin asked: "How about a free man, or somebody who could pass as one?"

"I suppose he could get through, except they tell me the going's rough when you get out in the sticks. Bandits and lions."

Bulness said: "D'you know how far this piece of the ancient world *does* extend?"

"Lemme think. Most of us archers comes from what would be the Balkans. All the boys got stories about what it was like back in the old country before the slavers snatched 'em, and they all stack up. They was all farmers or sheep-herders living in little one-room shacks, and none of 'em ever heard of the World Empire or longevity-treatments or rockets to Mars. No, I don't think Bulgaria and Romania is inside the force-wall, on account of my ticket took me to Sofia and Bucuresti. So we must be back in the real ancient world, two-three thousand years before we was born."

"Not necessarily," said Bulnes. "This experiment has been going on for less than a dozen years, yet we see middle-aged and elderly men all around us, all convinced they're authentic Athenians."

"How do you mean?" said Flin.

"If there's some system of introducing a false memory into a man's mind, so he thinks he's spent the fifty years of his life in ancient Athens, the same treatment could be given Mr. Diksen's fellow-archers, regardless of where they actually came from. Is there a real Sparta too, Mr. Diksen?"

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"Must be," said Diksen. "Coupla months ago they ordered us out on special duty because a gang of ambassadors came from there to dicker over some treaty with the big-shot. Bunch of sourpusses with long hair, and even dirtier than the Athenians, which is pretty damn dirty, see? Well, the Athenians ain't got no use for Spartans on account of they got no brains, no but that died down."

"Then we must be before the Peloponnesian War. How old does Perikles look?"

"Hard to say, on account of people got old so much faster in the old days. If he was a modern man I'd say he was around a hundred or a hundred and ten, but if he's a real ancient Grick I say sixty maybe."

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A Novel of the Strange Power that Enslaved the Women of Earth

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Man Meets Myth in a Riotous Novelet

By KENDELL FOSTER CROSSEN

manners, and no art, so the big-shot ordered us to escort these ambassadors in case some wise guy heaves a rock at 'em. But everything went off okay and the big-shot got his treaty."

"Who," said Bulnes, "is the big-shot?"

"The boss; the general; the head strategos. You know, Perikles."

FLIN nudged Bulnes. "Oho . . . now we're getting our period narrowed down. There isn't any war with Sparta right now?"

"No. There was some talk about it,

"When does that date us, Bil?" asked Bulnes.

"In the 430's—perhaps as close as 435 to 432 B. C. The Peloponnesian War should be just about ready to break out."

"Geez," said Diksen, "you mean we got a damn war on our hands too?"

"If history follows the same course it did the first time. That was the war that ruined Classical Greece. Dash it, if I'd known what I was getting into I'd have brought a copy of Thucydides."

"How ja know this ain't the first time, Mr. Flin?"

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Bulnes said: "That, my dear friends, is what we're trying to find out. Could we check by geography?"

"How?" inquired Flin.

"Let's say by changes in the coastline, or the degree of erosion of the hills."

"I don't see how. We have no very exact information on the state of such matters in Classical times, and even if we did we have no precise maps or other data to guide us. But—how about animal life? Mr. Diksen said something about lions, and there haven't been any wild lions in Europe since Classical times."

Bulnes said: "That wouldn't do either. Vasil could stock the country with lions from some African game-preserve. How about language. Do the pronunciation and syntax of these Greeks match those of the real ancient ones?"

Flin spread his hands. "How can I tell? Nobody made phonographic recordings of the speech of the time of Perikles, so we have to guess at their pronunciation, more or less. It sounds all right to me, but—"

"I got an idea!" said Diksen. "I once read in the paper about how the position of the stars keeps changing, so after a coupla thousand years the Big Dipper'll look like a frying-pan."

"That's it!" exclaimed Flin. "You know astronomy from your navigating experience, Knut; how about it?"

"Won't do," said Bulnes. "The change wouldn't be enough to settle the question. But you do give me an idea."

"What?" said the other two at once.

"The North Celestial Pole: the point in the sky around which the stars turn. It changes its position continually, making a complete circle in—I forget exactly—something like twenty-five thousand years. If I could find an astronomer with some simple instruments, I could determine whether the Pole is now near Alpha Ursae Minoris or Alpha Draconis or what. Who's an astronomer, Bil?"

"Oh, dear me," said Flin. "I'm supposed to be a Greek scholar and all that rot, but without my reference books I don't know the ruddy subject as well as I thought. Anaxagoras might still be alive, and let's see—there was some other chap trying to reform the calendar; can't think of his name. Not Myron, that's the sculptor, but something like that. Could you look into it, Mr. Diksen?"

"You want I should find an astronomer with a name something like Myron, huh?"

"That's it."

"Meanwhile, my dear friends," said Bulnes, "there's the little matter of making our livings, because this Athenian silver won't last forever."

"In the stories," said Flin, "the chappie who's tossed back in time makes his fortune by teaching the natives to add or by inventing the airplane."

"I wouldn't try that," said Diksen. "These Gricks ain't got no idear of the usefulness of machinery so long as they got a lot of poor shmos to work as slaves. When my beat was on the Akropolis I thought I'd save 'em trouble and get in with the right guys by suggesting wheelbarrows to haul their loads. What thanks do I get? 'Barbarian, you keep your damn nose out of what don't concern you. We Gricks is the only people can think, and we don't need no advice from no low-down slave. Now get going.' Boy, I coulda wrapped my bow around that guy's neck. Big-shot architect, name of Iktinos."

"We seem to have a complete cast of characters in any event," said Flin. "D'you know Aspasia?"

"Yeah, sure; that is, I know who she is."

"Sokrates?"

"The funny-looking bald guy, always picking arguments in the Agora? Yeah."

"Kleon the Tanner?"

"Maybe I heard of him. Not sure."

"Pheidias?"

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"Nope."

After Flin had gone through several more names (most of which Diksen did not know) Bulnes said: "The question of making a living remains unsettled, but I think Mr. Diksen is right, that we should get nowhere trying to invent ourselves into affluence. I certainly couldn't invent the airplane."

"I don't think it's important," said Flin. "If I find Thalia I'll jolly well set out for the nearest frontier and take my chances on getting through."

Bulnes noted that Flin showed no concern for the fate of his companion. Swallowing his irritation Bulnes replied: "Until we get some personal security I don't see how we can hunt effectively for your wife, even assuming she's in this time-stream or whatever you call it. Don't they keep the women shut up in harems here?"

"Yeah, they do," said Diksen. "Like they used to do in them oriental countries."

"What's your suggestion, then?" said Flin.

Bulnes said:

"If need be, we shouldn't be afraid of manual labor."

"A dashed poor prospect, Knut. Slave competition would keep wages down to the starvation level. However, if you become reasonably fluent in Classical Greek, why shouldn't we set up as sophists?"

"You mean those guys that lecture?" said Diksen.

"Absolutely. They were big business at the time, and were laying the foundations for higher education as we know it. We could give the people the Copernican system—"

"It seems to me," said Bulnes, "they used to feed hemlock poison to sophists who taught radical new ideas."

"Oh, we shall have to be careful."

"I think perhaps you've hit it," said Bulnes. "Mr. Diksen, how would it be if we hid out here a few days while our beards grow and we practice our Greek? Meanwhile you can hunt up this astronomer fellow."

"Sure. This guy here's Kallingos, and for a Grick innkeeper he's almost honest. I'll drop back down in about a week. If you want to look me up before then, come to the barracks on the Areopagos when I'm off duty." Diksen yawned. "Got to catch up on my sleep. So long!"

VI

BULNES was bored stiff; language was not one of his strong points, and Flin was not the best of teachers.

". . . in the indicative mood," said Flin implacably, "the secondary tenses are augmented . . ."

Flin broke off as Bulnes grasped his wrist, saying: "Did you see that tough-looking party talking to our host?"

"Yes. He's gone out now."

"I didn't like the look he gave us."

Bulnes shifted to his rudimentary Classical Greek. He had found that by throwing in a word of Modern Greek when he could not think of the Classical form he could sometimes make himself understood. "O Kallingos!"

"You called?"

"Mine dear fellow, shall you not—ah—share cup of you—uh—excellent wine at us?"

"What did you say?"

Bulnes repeated the offer with even greater care.

"*Nai*," said the innkeeper, wagging his head and confusing Bulnes until the latter remembered that this meant "yes." "O Bouleus, you are as polite as a Mede, though not so stupid. *Boy!* Another cup. You should not, however, call this Attic bellywash 'excellent.' If I could sell you a jar of my Lesbian . . ."

"What's he saying?" Bulnes asked Flin, who translated.

Bulnes gathered his mental forces and replied: "Me fear not; no got enough money. Whom—uh—who am the man—er—what's the word, Bil?"

"The man with whom you were

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speaking," said Flin.

"Not the kind of man," said Kallingos, "you like to talk about."

"What's that, Bil? . . . Who this man, please?"

Kallingos lowered his voice. "Phaleas the son of Kniphon."

Bulnes and Flin exchanged glances of incomprehension. The latter said: "Didn't Diksen say something about Phaleas's gang?"

"Could be he." Bulnes turned to Kallingos. "Are him—er—ah—uh—"

"The noted criminal," put in Flin.

Kallingos looked over his shoulder. "He is. He says two members of his band were slain four nights ago by a pair of barbarians, and he is now looking for these killers to revenge himself. They were huge powerful men in some hideous Scythian or Persian costume. Some of the band were enjoying a game of knucklebones when these giants sprang out of the dark, stabbed two to death, and would have done in the rest had they not run away. That was the same night that the mysterious ship appeared in Zea Harbor."

"What mysterious ship?"

"Have you not heard? The state galley *Paralos* was caught by the storm on her way back from Epidauros and rode it out behind Salamis. When the wind fell she made a run for home, even though night had fallen, and was feeling her way into Zea when she struck a strange ship that had taken her usual anchorage. The ship sank near the wharves, and can be dimly seen lying on the bottom even now, with sails of strange cut mounted all awry. There is some talk of sending divers down to fasten ropes to the hull."

"To raise she?" said Bulnes, concealing his eagerness.

"Zeus, no! What use have we for an outlandish rig like that? They will tow her into deeper water where she will not interfere with navigation. But now all the barber-shops buzz with speculation as to whether there might not be a connection between these two events."

"I see . . . O friend Kallingos, I fear we must leaves tomorrow."

"I am sorry. Is there anything you do not like?"

"No; it are that we am going at Athens."

"It is too bad you could not stay over tomorrow," said Kallingos. "It is the day of the Dionysia."

"What is being shown?" asked Bil Flin.

"The *Aias* of Sophokles and two other plays, at our own Dionysiac Theater. As Euripides is not competing this year, the *Aias* may win."

"I say!" said Flin, in English. "I shouldn't care to miss—"

"Shut up, my dear Wiyem," said Bulnes, then, to Kallingos: "Will them play be shown again anywhere?"

"Yes, at the regular Dionysia in Athens."

"We may see him then. Meanwhile, could you recommend us to a innkeeper in Athens as honest like you?"

Kallingos made a gesture. "To be frank, there is none in Attika so honest as I. Wherever else you go you will be deceived and robbed. If you ask for your wine diluted with one part of water, you will get it cut with two. However, you will not be too badly robbed at the inn of Podokles, a few houses east of the Agora."

Bulnes thanked Kallingos and went up to the dormitory, where Flin burst out: "What d'you mean by making a plan like that without consulting me? The logical thing is to exhaust the Peiraieus looking for Thalia before we think of moving. We've got a good innkeeper—"

"But this gang—" said Bulnes gesturing impatiently.

Flin, however, though usually timid in the face of physical risk, had gone into a pet of the unreasonable obstinacy with which weak men sometimes try to assert themselves. Bulnes let him run down and then said: "I'm going tomorrow, my dear fellow. You may do as you like."

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WHEN the eastern sky began to lighten, Bulnes groaned and forced himself up. He and Flin munched their sops and paid up; Flin said no more about refusing to move to Athens, and Bulnes refrained from taunting him.

Bulnes noted that Kallingos tried to swindle them out of only two or three oboloi—for an Attic innkeeper, he supposed, comparative rectitude. Then, as the sun gilded the brass helmet of Athenë Promachos on the Akropolis, the two travellers gathered their himatia about them and set out upon the dusty road to Athens, Bulnes muttering the paradigms of irregular verbs.

They pushed to northward through the stirring seaport towards the gate adjacent to the junction of the North Long Wall and the Peiraic Wall. After passing through the gate they came upon the muddy Kephisos in full spring spate, not yet shrunken with the summer drouth. The highway crossed the river by a ford.

Bulnes sighed. "Here, my friend, it seems we get wet."

Flin gathered up his himation, growling: "Jolly unfortunate we didn't land in a later century when they'd have had a bridge."

They climbed out the far side and trudged up the hard-beaten wagon-track across the flat Attic plain. Most of the plain was a waste of new grass and wild-flowers, with a few stands of wheat and clumps of gray-green olive-trees in the hollows. Other roads, even more rudimentary, joined theirs at intervals. Along these roads, mostly towards Athens, moved a traffic of vegetables, hides, firewood, and similar commodities. This traffic, sometimes on the backs of donkeys and sometimes on those of men, thickened as they neared the city.

After more than an hour the road confusingly began to fork and rejoin itself as they neared the walls of Athens. On a flat space in front of the wall a group of men with shields, spears, and crested helmets marched back and forth.

Stopping to draw breath and watch, Bulnes remarked: "They don't look much like Greek gods, dó they?"

They did not, for the Athenian militiamen came in the usual range of human sizes and shapes, tall and short, fat and thin. Like the Greeks of Bulnes's own time they were nearly all brunets, tending towards a stocky build with broad heads and big Armenoid noses.

Flin sighed. "I confess I find them something of a disappointment."

They followed the crowd through the nearest gate, a complex structure evidently intended as a practical defense, for it included two sets of doors with a passage between them overlooked by galleries. A little group of Scythian archers watched the traffic and straightened out tangles.

INSIDE, a street about five meters wide led in the direction of the Akropolis. The city itself, however, proved far from impressive: a huddle of one-storey mud-brick buildings with the same blank windowless outer walls that Bulnes had noticed in the Peiraieus. Here, moreover, instead of being laid out in a rectangular grid, the houses were placed every which way. The streets were nothing but crooked little alleys winding among the houses, often barely wide enough to let two pedestrians pass, with no pavements anywhere. The stench was worse than at the seaport, and out of this noisome confusion rose the Akropolis, crowned with marble and bronze, like a tiara on a garbage-heap.

Bulnes let his companion lead the way. Presently the street opened out into the Agora, like that of the Peiraieus but bigger. It proved to be an open space in name only, for in addition to the statues, monuments, and plane-trees that dotted it, it was crammed with tradesmen's kiosks.

The space left among these structures was crowded with Athenians, all reek-

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ing of garlic, waving their hands, shouting, laughing, haggling, arguing, and shaking fists in each other's faces. Many wore violets in their hair—"In honor of the Dionysia," Flin explained. The morning sun shone on bald heads, diseased skins, and beggars in all stages of human infirmity.

Flin pushed sunward through the crowd; Bulnes, towering over the short Greeks, strolled after him, wishing he had pants pockets to thrust his hands into. Flin kept glancing about.

"Looking for somebody?" asked Bulnes.

"My wife, of course. And I thought we might catch sight of Sokrates or Prodikos."

"My dear fellow! We don't even know yet if it's the real Sokrates or a modern imitation, and in any case I doubt if you could recognize him." Bulnes turned and spoke to a passing Athenian: *"To pandokeion Podoklou?"*

"I do not know," said the man, and went his way.

Another half-hour's search and more questions brought them to their goal in the Limoupedion district. Podokles proved to be a burly fellow with part of his nose missing from a sword-cut, and a suspicious air, who said: "Foreigners, eh? Where are you from?"

Bulnes had expected Flin to carry the burden of negotiations, but the teacher was lost in the contemplation of the design on a jar. This design showed a horse-tailed satyr pursuing a group of nymphs with intentions which the artist had made all too plain.

Accordingly Bulnes told Podokles: "Tartessos. I be Boules and him Philon."

"Where is that?"

"In far West. Kallingos at Peiraieus referred us to you. We stayed with he."

"Then you might be all right," said Podokles dubiously.

Bulnes handed Podokles the bag containing their modern clothes (recovered from the arsenal) and their few other possessions, and asked: "When are lunch?"

"Name of the dog, you fellows get hungry early! If you want anything prepared, go buy it and bring it to my cook."

Bulnes said to Flin: "I can't get used to beginning the day at dawn. Let's look up Diksen."

They went out and trudged through the filth towards the Hill of Ares, looking around to be sure of finding their way back.

VII

ROY DIKSEN, alias Pardokas, came out of the barracks rubbing the sleep out of his eyes. "Geez, I didn't expect to see you two for several days yet!"

Bulnes told him of the activities of Phaleas the gangster.

"Uh-huh," said Diksen. "I'd like to pin something on that ganef, but I think he's bought protection from one of the big-shots. Can you make with the Grick, now?"

"Enough to manage. Have you found our astronomer?"

"Yeah, just yesterday. Old geezer, name of Meton, lives just off the Agora."

"Meton!" said Flin. "By jove, I remember now: He's the chap who burned—I mean he will burn his house down in—umm—fifteen or twenty years so that the Assembly will order his son to stay home from the Sicilian expedition to take care of him."

Bulnes looked questioningly at Flin. "How do we get access to this Meton?"

"That would take a bit of doing, you know. An Athenian's home is his castle."

Bulnes asked Diksen: "Does Meton ever go to the Agora?"

"Naw; just sits around diddling with his calendars and things."

Bulnes said: "I suppose, my dear friends, we shall have to find someone who can tender the proper introductions."

"I wish you luck," said Diksen, "but I can't help you none. An introduction from a slave wouldn't be no recommendation."

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Bulnes said: "At least you could tell us where to find Sokrates in the Agora."

"I guess he mostly hangs out around the *Basileios Stoa.* Or one of them places," Diksen added vaguely.

BULNES and Flin left the pseudo-Scythian and walked back down the slope of the Areopagos. Flin, wistfully eyeing the Akropolis a mere hundred meters away over his shoulder, said: "You don't suppose we could take an hour off for a spot of sight-seeing?"

"No, my dear Bil, I don't."

"We can at least take this street that runs down to the south end of the Agora. See those holes in the cliff?"

"Yes."

"They're the caves of Pan and Apollo. There are supposed to be secret stairs or passages leading from them up to the Akrolopis . . . and there are the Long Rocks; those are the statues of the Tribal Heroes . . ."

Back at the Agora they soon located the Royal Stoa among the shops and offices along the west side of the plaza. Inside the building a crowd of people watched an argument being conducted before a man who sat on a raised seat and wore a purple himation and a dried-up wreath on his head.

"That," said Flin, "must be the King."

"I thought this was a republic?"

"It is, but they've kept the kingship as a sort of vestigial office. As I recall, he's a combination high-priest and domestic-relations judge."

"I see. Please start asking people for Sokrates."

"Dash it all, you know I hate speaking to strangers! Why don't you? You need the practice."

"Oh, all right; for you I will. But kindly listen to their replies and be prepared to translate. When they speak fast I get lost." Knut Bulnes turned his best Greek on one of his immediate neighbors: "Have you see Sokrates, please?"

Within a quarter-hour he had collected a variety of replies: "What?" "No." "I do not know the man." "Do you mean Sokrates the Carpenter?" "I have never heard of him." "What are you saying?" "Not today." "I do not understand you." "He and his questions! When I catch that scoundrel . . ." "I am a stranger too." "No, and if you find him, tell him Mnesiphilos wants his five drachmai back." "Who are *you?*" And finally: "You are looking in the wrong place; he is usually to be found in the *Stoa Poikile.*"

"Thank you," said Bulnes, and turned to Flin, "Where now?"

"I think the Painted Porch was—is—across the Agora. And if you expect to pass as an Athenian you'll have to drop those ceremonious manners."

THEY pushed out into the noonday glare, stopping at the Bread Market long enough to buy a big loaf from a truculent old woman for three coppers. Though Bulnes hungrily eyed a sausage-seller's stock, Flin objected: "Probably give you trichinosis. Anyway this bread's so full of garlic and things it has all the vitamins we need."

They won through the mob to the Painted Porch, where Flin gabbled over the murals: one of the Battle of Marathon, one of the Sack of Troy, one of Theseus fighting the Amazons, and one of some other battle. Bulnes resumed the questioning of passersby about Sokrates until Flin plucked at his cloak, saying: "Over there. Looks like a sophist with his pupils."

A dignified-looking graybeard was sitting on a bench and lecturing three younger men. Bulnes went up behind the hearers and held up his hand until the lecturer interrupted himself:

"Yes? You wish something?"

"Thousand pardons, sir, but have you see Sokrates?"

One of the youths said something nasty about barbarians who sought wisdom before they could even speak Greek, and the other two laughed. However, the graybeard cut through the ribaldry: "No, my good man, for he is not in

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the city of Athens today."

"Indeed?"

"In fact the fellow has gone off on a picnic to revel with the nymphs and satyrs on Mount Hymettos. You may find him back here tomorrow . . . where was I? Ah, yes, whereas the Philolaos has been asserting the world to be a sphere, this speculation is shown to be absurd and untenable by . . ."

"Now can we visit the Akropolis, Knut? Can we?" said Flin.

"Very well, my dear comrade."

THEY walked back to the south end of the Agora and thence to the path that wound up the west end of the Akropolis, through the Propylaia or entrance, and out at last on to the flat top of the great ship-shaped hill. With each step Flin's condition became more ecstatic until he broke into a run, dashing from statue to statue as if his life depended upon his seeing everything at once. He babbled happily:

"That's the great Athenë Promachos, Knut, though the name only goes back . . . a Pheidias original! Think of it!"

He put out a finger and delicately touched the brazen foot of the ten-meter colossus, then moved on to where a group of workmen were planting a life-sized statue of Athenë on its pedestal, with ropes and grunts.

" . . . and this must be Myron's group of Athenë and Marsyas, only Marsyas isn't mounted yet. Excuse me," he said to an elderly man directing operations, "but are you Myron?"

"Why yes," said the man.

Flin shut his eyes and squeezed his hands together. "I've seen Myron! I've seen Myron! Isn't it the most dashed wonderful thing you ever saw, Knut? Come on, there's the Parthenon!"

And off he galloped, sandals flapping. "No, the entrance is around the far end."

"Why," asked Bulnes, "should they put the entrance at the east end when you come up on to the Akropolis from the West? Does that make sense?"

"Some religious reason, or perhaps they wanted the rising sun to light the statue inside for dawn ceremonies. Isn't it beautiful?"

Bulnes said: "I must say the Akropolis looks different from what I expected. All those bright colors give the effect of one of the gaudier American amusement-parks."

THREE hours later they slouched into the inn of Podokles. Bulnes said: "I've got museum feet, and I think a nice big mug of wine—thank you, my dear Podokles. Wiyem, if you find yourself broke in Athens, you can make a living as a tourist-guide. But don't try to show everything at once."

"I suppose I did let my enthusiasm run away with me," said Flin humbly. He made a face at his wine. "Hang it all, if I could only have a dish of tea!"

"Wrong century."

"Uh-huh. I admit the sheer physical discomfort of this environment does take some of the bloom off."

"Personally," said Bulnes, "I shall be satisfied hereafter to view ancient Greece in the form of museum exhibits. Podokles, my friend, give us of your wisdom. How is Periklean regime doing?"

The innkeeper, thawing to Bulnes's persistent friendliness, planted his broad bottom on the bench. "Not too well."

"How so?"

"Everybody expected war with Sparta and was full of enthusiasm. Then the Perikles suddenly made a treaty with the Spartans, compromised with the Corinthians, and offered the Potidaians synaecism."

"Offered them what?"

"Common citizenship with Athens. A lot of the commercial people are saying: why go to all the trouble of building up an empire if we are to give its benefits away to foreigners? What do you think?"

Bulnes smiled. "I fear as foreigners

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my friend and I is prejudice."

"What?"

"Never mind. What will come of these?"

"I do not know. I fear that if the Perikles continues to follow a soft life in foreign affairs, the radical factions will join with the extreme conservatives to gain control of the Assembly. I, now, am for moderation, wherefore I have always favored the Perikles."

"So that's how it was!" said Flin.

"We don't know yet," said Bulnes, and to Podokles: "How do the radicals propose to attack Perikles?"

"There is a rumor—Polites Eurybotou was repeating it here the other night—that Diopithes and Kleon and those fellows were going after his friends, since he himself is too popular. They think they have something on some of them."

Flin exclaimed: "Then it is real! It must be! Because that's just what happened! We've got to warn Perikles they're after Pheidias and Anaxagoras and Aspasia!"

"Take it easy, my dear fellow," said Bulnes. "What shall they do to Perikles' friends?"

"Indictments," said Podokles. "For instance, the Pheidias handled a lot of gold in his work on the New Hekatompedon of Athenë Polias—"

"The which?"

Flin interjected: "What you'd call the Parthenon. Go on, Podokles."

"As I was saying, he handled much gold in doing the work, and it would be surprising if some had not stuck to his fingers . . ."

Later Flin told Bulnes: "This waiting is driving me mad! Here we're running out of money with no more in sight; my wife is God knows where; the plot against Perikles is gathering; and we sit waiting for Sokrates."

Bulnes shrugged. "You can't rush things like that without ruining them. And what makes you so sure we want to save Perikles?"

"Don't you see? The Peloponnesian War ruined Hellenic culture—"

"I thought Aristotle and a lot of other important thinkers came after this war?"

"They did, but—oh, it's too complicated to explain. Political morality had broken down and so on. Evidently Perikles tried to stave off the war, but the rabble-rousers forced his hand by attacking his associates, so he dropped his efforts to conciliate Sparta and let the war break out to unite the people behind him. Now if we could only—"

"My dear friend, we don't even know yet if this be the genuine Perikles. Even assuming we're back in ancient times, what should we accomplish? Perhaps we should find ourselves unable to change anything, since an act once done can hardly be undone. Or if we did change events we should alter all subsequent history and destroy ourselves in the process."

"Nonsense! We haven't disappeared yet. We might start history off on another tack—"

"So men would perfect the solar bomb in the third century instead of the twentieth, and having no notion of a world society would merrily blow each other off the face of the globe? Let's wait till we have all the facts."

VIII

NEXT morning found them scouring the Agora until, several hours after sunrise, a disturbance around the Painted Porch drew their attention. There stood a new arrival among the talkers and loafers: a short bald potbellied snub-nosed man of about forty, barefoot, wearing nothing but a ragged himation, whom it did not need the greetings of his acquaintances to identify as Sokrates. He looked remarkably, thought Bulnes, like the satyr on the vase-painting at the inn of Podokles.

The dignified graybeard of the previous day was there too, saying: "Rejoice, O Sokrates!" with the rest.

"Rejoice, O Protagoras," said Sokra-

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tes. "I heard you were in Athens and hastened to see you. How long will you be with us this time?"

"Perhaps a month. Have you seen my young colleague Demokritos?"

"I do know him. Is he in Athens too?"

"He set out before I did, and should be here unless he has been lost at sea."

"Well, we have not seen him hereabouts," said Sokrates.

Flin breathed: "That was Protagoras we spoke to yesterday! I never thought we should run into anybody really *important,* just like that!"

"Who the devil's Protagoras?" asked Bulnes.

"Such ignorance! He's—oh, hush up and listen!"

Sokrates continued: "Are you giving courses, Protagoras?"

"A brief one to pay my travelling expenses."

"How do you expect the purity of philosophy to withstand the contamination of vulgar commercial transactions?"

"As to that, Sokrates, I am not aware of any rule that philosophers have not the same right to eat as other men. Therefore I charge."

"Therefore you consider your teachings worth money?"

"Certainly," replied Protagoras.

"But I remember on your last visit, when we argued whether virtue could be taught, you professed that your teachings were priceless. If they are priceless, you obviously cannot put a price upon them."

"Sokrates, you are an amusing rascal and I am glad to see you, but I will be ground to sausage and fed to Kerberos before I let you entrap me in one of your quibbles again."

"Do not be angry! I admit I am an ignorant man in search of wisdom, and here you come, the godlike Protagoras, all the way from windy Abdera to dispense it, so naturally I make the most of my oppor—"

"Excuse me," said Protagoras firmly, with the expression of one determined to get out of the pythonlike embrace of the Sokratic dialectics. "I see a couple of strangers who were asking for you yesterday. Come forward, sirs, and give your names."

"Me?" said Bulnes, a little disconcerted. "I am—uh—Bouleus of Tartessos, and my friend am Philon of Tartessos. Hearing you were—ah—wisest man in Athens, Sokrates, we sought you out to make selves better."

SOKRATES smiled an embarrassed grin. "No, no, somebody has been filling you with lies. My only advantage is that I know I am ignorant, whereas the other simpletons do not."

"Tartessos?" said Protagoras. "Is that not in Spain, at the very rim of the known world?"

"It is," said Bulnes.

Protagoras continued: "I thought that city was either destroyed by the Carthaginians, or sunk beneath the sea by an earthquake, back about the Seventieth Olympiad. I have heard both tales."

Bulnes, whose knowledge of historical geography was slight, turned to Flin. The little Englishman stepped into the breach: "True, Tartessos is not what it was, but it has not been destroyed. It has decayed because the silting up of the Tartessis River has left it stranded among great mud-flats, so that it is no longer accessible to large ships."

"I see," said Protagoras. "Are the stories of its former mineral wealth true?"

"Quite true. In fact we Tartessians believe your poet Homeros based his Scheria, the city of the Phaiakes in the Odyssey, upon an account of Tartessos."

Protagoras smiled. "Evidently the Tartessians are feeling their way to the theory of my colleague Prodikos of Keos, that all myths are either personifications of natural forces or exaggerated versions of the deeds of mortal men."

Bulnes said, "Gentlemen: I will with you permission—ah—put up a puzzle

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to you. Let us suppose the world are inhabited by race of gods who powers are far beyond our. They can fly to the moon, talk to each other over thousands of stadia, and light their dwellings with lamp that require no oil.

"Let us suppose this gods can make men complete not only in body but also in mind; so that a man just made has a memory stretching all the way back to his non-existent childhood. And let us suppose as an experiment these god set aside part of the earth called 'Hellas' and stock it with the present population of those lands, all with the necessary—er—pseudo-memories, and a complete outfit of buildings, ship, and the like. Now, let us suppose you are those people, and experiment started five or six years ago. How might you prove otherwise?"

"But," objected Protagoras, "I have a clear memory going back more years than I like to think—certainly many more than six."

"I allowed for that. How could you prove this not a false memory implanted in you mind by the gods who made you six years ago?"

"Ridiculous," said a bystander.

Bulnes turned to the objector with his blandest smile. "No doubt, my dear fellow, but how would you prove?"

SOKRATES said: "What happens when one of these newly made Hellenes sets forth on a long journey, as when a Greek city sends people to found a colony in the Euxine Sea? They would come to the bounds of this Hellas and enter the country of the gods, so discovering themselves to be mere pets, like carp in a fish-pond."

Bulnes said: "We shall suppose the gods put the traveller to sleep as he nears boundary, and then awaken him at an appropriate time and set him on the route back to Hellas, with a set of false memories of him journey through barbarous lands."

"You mean," said Protagoras, "that such places as Egypt and Spain do not exist, save as images implanted in our minds by these crafty gods of yours?"

"Perhaps, perhaps not. For all you know my friend and I might be gods come to see how the experiment are going. Except, of course, if we were we would not let you in on the secret so careless."

"I see," said Protagoras. "Very ingenious. In fact it agrees with what I have been preaching for years, that as all our knowledge comes through our fallible senses, reality may be vastly different from what it seems because of the distortions of our perceiving-apparatus."

Sokrates said: "I should agree, except that you do not allow for the direct inspiration of the soul by the divine powers. Otherwise, it is as if we were prisoners sitting at the entrance to a cave, facing the far wall, with our heads so shackled that we could not move, and trying to make out what is happening in the world outside by the shadows thrown on the cave wall and the sounds of traffic and conversation behind us."

"A striking example, Sokrates," said Protagoras. "And now I must get back to my pupils. I shall see you again. Rejoice!"

Sokrates said to Bulnes: "Tartessos does produce acute reasoners, especially for a barbaric land. What do Tartessians hold to be the ultimate good?"

Bulnes, foreseeing an endless argument, said: "That depends on the men: Some seeking the satisfaction of their own appetites, some the good of their fellows, and some the advancement of knowledges. And for us, we are so ignorant as you say yourself to be, and hope you will enlighten us. What does *you* think?"

"Oh, I am without doubt the most ignorant man in all Hellas! You should have asked the Protagoras; he knows all the answers, and will gladly convey them to you at fifty drachmai a day. However, now that you have asked me, I will try to demonstrate the identity of the good, the true, and the beautiful—"

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"One moment, O Sokrates!" said Bulnes in some alarm. "Before you begin, do you know Meton the astronomer?"

"Why yes, I know him, and Anaxagoras and Archelaos and all that crew. When I was interested in such matters I consorted with them regularly, before I decided upon the futility of all material science. The true astronomer, I now maintain, should have no need to spend his nights on his roof gazing at the stars, catching a cold in his head and a crick in his neck; he should derive the laws of the universe by pure logic. For reason is the only infallible sense possessed by man; the others are fallible and delusive, and when applied to the vulgar and imperfect things of this material world—"

"True," interrupted Bulnes, "but we wondered if—that is, you could do us a great favor by introducing us to Meton. As foreigners, you know, we cannot walk up to him front door and—"

"What do you want to know that fellow for? All his star-gazing and calendar-calculating have not made one wife more faithful or one politician more honest. Such prying into divine secrets never meant for mortals to know is sheer insanity. Now, as I was saying—"

"Because," persisted Bulnes, "while your wisdom is without doubt of a more fundamental and significant kind, the city of Tartessos, when he sent us forth, told us to look him up to ask him some questions about geography and such matters."

Flin added: "As I understand it, to have legal protection while here we must enrol with the Polemarchos as registered metics and get some citizen to stand as our patron. Now, if you—ahem—could see your way—"

"Nothing easier," said Sokrates. "But as I was saying about the good, nothing is simply good in relation to nothing; everything must be good for something, or the reverse, and thus a thing can be both good and bad, depending upon . . ."

Not daring to interrupt again, Bulnes gritted his teeth to listen.

Six hours later Sokrates glanced at the lowering sun. "By the Dog of Egypt! I have talked the day through without stopping even to eat. You poor fellows must be starved! Boy!"

A young man sitting on the ground with his back to a pillar and dozing, now got up and wrapped himself in a himation even more ragged than that of Sokrates. Bulnes realized with a slight shock that this must be Sokrates's personal slave; he had not thought of the philosopher as a slave-owner.

Sokrates said: "Two days ago I spent my last obolos for a meal for Dromon and myself, and hence must depend upon my friends until my next rents come in."

"Oh!" said Bulnes. "You must allow us! While fare at our inn are not that of Persian kings . . ."

"A kind offer," said Sokrates, "but I have a better idea: Whom did you wish to meet? Meton? Let us therefore sponge on him for dinner!"

And the philosopher set off at a pace that made the short Flin pant, and forced even Bulnes to stretch his long legs.

IX

SOKRATES banged the door of Meton's house with his stick and roared: "Boy! Boy!"

When the spy-hole opened and a wrinkled face appeared, the philosopher added: "Tell your master, the greatest dunce in Athens is here with two other ninnies from far countries!"

The hole closed, and after a while opened again to disclose a man older than Sokrates but younger than Protagoras: a thin man with a sharp glittering-eyed expression.

"O Sokrates!" said the man. "I have not seen you since the banquet at the house of Alkamenes last year, when you got drunk and danced the kordax!"

"I am never drunk!" retorted Sokrates. "Besides, you were asleep under your couch at the time and could not

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see what I was dancing."

"And who are these?" said Meton.

"My new acquaintances from far Tartessos. You will find them quite gentlemanly even though they be not Hellenes, let alone Athenians." Sokrates introduced them, adding: "They say they have an astronomical problem for you."

"Come in, come in, do not stand there like so many herms," said Meton. He turned and shouted back over his shoulder: "*E!* You women, out of there!"

There was a twitter of female voices and a scrambling sound. Bulnes started to follow Sokrates through the vestibule, but was stopped by Meton, who said in a marked manner:

"Are you not going to leave your shoes?"

"I is sorry," said Bulnes, and doffed his sandals before following Meton into the open court at the end of the passage.

The court was a bare rectangle of beaten earth with an altar in the middle, from which a thread of incense-smoke arose. The barren patch was surrounded by wooden columns holding up the inner edge of the roof, and the columns in turn were encompassed by a lot of dark little curtained cells opening on to the court. In the courtyard stood a table on which was spread a mass of sheets of papyrus held down by a stone for a paperweight. In one corner a very old man sat at a smaller table, working on some similar sheets.

"Rejoice, Anaxagoras!" Sokrates called across the court to the oldster, who replied in kind.

"What is your problem, men of Tartessos?" asked Meton.

Bulnes had been composing sentences in anticipation of this question. He said: "You—uh—know the theory, Meton, that the earth is round like a ball?"

"Yes, of course," said Meton. "The silly Pythagoreans have been making that claim for several years, and I begin to think they have hit upon the right answer by the wrong method. It would explain many things, such as the shape of the earth's shadow during eclipses of the moon."

Sokrates said: "My good Meton, this materialistic so-called science of yours is bankrupt and you might as well admit it. You and your colleagues have gazed at the stars and plucked at lyre-strings and tried to weigh smoke in a bag, and you have come to a dead end. The material senses alone can do no more for you. If you would seek divine aid in bettering your character, now—"

"Later, later," said Meton. "Let us finish with these strangers first. What about the roundness of the earth?"

BULNES said: "We Tartessians believe if we can get measurement of height of the North Celestial Pole from the horizon in enough places, we shall be materials for a complete—uh—complete—what's the word, Bil?"

"Map."

"A complete map of the world."

"*Papai!* Now that is an idea," said Meton, making gestures with his fingers. "The angle from the North Celestial Pole to the horizon will be the same as the angle the observer stands at from the equator toward the North Pole, would it not? A neat point. O Anaxagoras!"

The old man looked up.

"Come here and take some notes. These men have brought an interesting theorem with them."

Anaxagoras came over with a papyrus sheet and wrote as Meton dictated.

"Are you really Anaxagoras of Klazomenai?" asked Flin, eyes bugging.

"Indeed I am," quavered the oldster. "Do the Tartessians then know of the poor old Anaxagoras, neglected of the world and sunk to a pensioner of the generous Meton?"

"Nonsense!" gruffed Meton. "He enjoys feeling sorry for himself. That is all for the present, old man. Well then, Bouleus of Tartessos, what more do you wish?"

"We thought if you had instruments at your house, you might let us make observations of the position of the Pole

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to find it height here at Athens."

"Hm. That could be arranged. I tell you: come back here this evening after dinner and we will take a look from the roof. You will stay, will you not, Sokrates?"

"I shall not need much urging," said Sokrates. "Good-bye for the present, my foreign friends."

Bulnes said to Flin in English: "That's what in America they call the bum's rush." Then to Meton: "Many thanks, my dear sir; it is an honor to have meet you."

"Nonsense: it is no honor at all. Be back after dark, but do not keep me up all night waiting—what is it, Anaxagoras?"

The oldster had been plucking at Meton's chiton. Now he muttered into Meton's ear. After a whispered argument Meton said: "Anaxagoras asks me to invite you to stay so he can question you on the geography of Spain. He is always after such details to improve his world-map, you know. How about it?"

Bulnes smiled broadly. "You are much too kind—"

"Of course if you have an engagement—" said Meton hopefully.

"—but my colleague and I would not miss an hour in such learned company for anythings. We accept with heartfelt thanks."

Meton, looking none too pleased, turned to shout to a slave to set extra places. Anaxagoras laid a bony hand on the arms of Flin and Bulnes, saying: "If you will step into my room, my dear friends . . ."

The room turned out to be one of the airless, lightless cubicles opening on to the court. Anaxagoras thrust the curtain aside and ushered them in.

INSIDE, Bulnes saw, leaning against one wall, a huge rectangular sheet of papyrus in a wooden frame. On it was drawn a world map with Greece in the center of a great circular land-mass in which the Mediterranean, Red, and Caspian Seas made indentations from different directions. While Greece was drawn with fair accuracy, the other parts became less and less recognizable as one went outward from the center. After some puzzling, Bulnes made out that the tapering horn on the left extremity of Europe was supposed to represent the Iberian Peninsula.

He said: "With all due modesty, my dear Anaxagoras, I thinks I can improve on that. Have you something to draw with?"

Anaxagoras produced a piece of charcoal from the litter and said: "Draw on the wall, if you will."

Bulnes was just finishing the British Isles when he heard their host's call. Meton beckoned them towards the door at the farther end of the court. Through this door they entered a large and barely furnished room with a floor of stone. In one far corner stood another altar; in the other, a great pile of manuscripts, work-sheets, drawing-instruments, and the like, which litter looked as though it had been hastily pushed aside to make room for the couches which the slaves were now setting out.

Bulnes sighed as he resigned himself to a discomfort he had so far escaped: that of eating gentleman-style, reclining on a sofa.

In briefing him on Athenian customs and manners, Flin had dilated on the glories of the Athenian dinner-party with its contests of wit and song and its other formidable qualities. This one, however, proved much simpler. Meton seemed to have simply stretched his originally modest meal of fish, bread, and assorted greens still further. He occupied the head couch with Sokrates, and instead of discussing questions of ponderous philosophic import they chattered about sports and the high cost of living and the doings of their mutual acquaintances while a pet marten climbed over them.

At the other side Flin, sprawled with Anaxagoras, argued the question of whether the moon was inhabited, leav-

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ing Bulnes to munch his celery in solitary silence. Bulnes did so except when Anaxagoras became involved in an argument with a slave whom he accused of serving him wine of a grade inferior to that of the rest of the company. Then Bulnes spoke across to Flin: "At last, my dear Wiyem, I've found a race who cook worse than the English!"

"Huh," said Flin. "At least they don't smother everything with pepper the way they do it in Spain."

"What is that?" said Meton.

Flin answered the astronomer in the latter's language: "A thousand pardons, my dear sir; we have be praising your splendid cuisine."

METON snorted. "Nothing splendid about it! It is the Corinthians and barbarians who live for their bellies."

"Precisely," said Bulnes. "So healthfully modest in quantity and rugged in quality! None of *your* guests will ever stuff self till he becomes useless ball of fat."

Sokrates added sententiously: "Nothing in excess. Let us eat to live, not live to eat."

Meton shot a sharp look at Bulnes, then apparently decided to take the comment at its face value.

"Oh, well," he said, "if you put it that way, I am glad you appreciate it. However, since you have set us a task this evening, we will not waste time matching verses from the Poet or tossing dregs at a mark. As the stars will soon be out, we shall have one more pull at the wine, and then off to the roof." They reached the roof by a ladder. Bulnes was a little alarmed to see Anaxagoras struggling up behind the rest, but the ancient bag of bones reached the top without visible difficulty.

The roof itself was flat and made of some composition like adobe. From here Bulnes could appreciate the figure-eight plan of the house, with its two open interior courts and blank outer wall. He walked over to the corner where stood a group of primitive astronomical instruments: sighting-devices more or less like the forestaffs and astrolabes of later centuries, with angles marked off in simple fractions of a circle.

Meton adjusted one of the instruments. "Come here, Bouleus," he said. "Look along these sights. Now, do you see that star, the tip of the tail of the Little Bear? And that one, the nearest one to it in the constellation Cepheus? Move your pointer about one-fifth from the first star to the second, and you will be very close to the point you seek. It is unfortunate that there is no bright star near the spot—"

"Bil!" cried Bulnes in English. "It's still in its normal position!"

"What do you mean by that?"

"I mean we're still in the twenty-seventh century, *Anno Domini!* If we were back in the fifth B. C. it would be —let's see—The other side of Alpha Ursae Minoris, over towards Alpha Draconis. If I had a good star-map I could show you exactly—"

"No!" cried Flin.

"Look at it yourself."

"Oh, blast it, you know I'm ignorant about such matters. But this can't all be a fake. It's too good!"

"There's your evidence. At least it makes finding Thalia a bit more hopeful."

X

AS THEY walked homeward with Sokrates, Bulnes said: "Ahem—ah—Sokrates, perhaps you can help us . . ."

"In what way?"

"Like yourself, we often find that vulgar money-matters interfere with the search for higher truths. To be frank, the stipend with which our city sent us forth is shrinking like the snows in spring, and—uh—"

"Gentlemen!" said Sokrates. "Were I as rich as Kallias I should be glad to help you, but as it is . . ."

"I did not mean that! We have considered honest methods of fattening our purses before proceeding to our next

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stop, and it strikes us that, since some of our scientific ideas seem unknown here, perhaps we could set ourself up as professor like Protagoras . . ."

"Well?" said Sokrates in a sharper tone.

"We thought you could advise us how much to charge and where to round up some pupils—"

"I? I, who for years have been deploring and ridiculing the prostitution of philosophy by these same hucksters? I help you to continue this debasement of the divine faculties? My good men, you have been misinformed—"

"Excuse us, please," said Bulnes. "Let us consider the proposition as not having been make."

"Of course," continued Sokrates, "not being Athenians you could not be expected to view these matters according to civilized standards of honor. I suggest you consult Protagoras himself, who is well qualified to advise you in the liming of twigs to catch some of our more credulous birds. And here our paths diverge. Rejoice!"

Off he strode, his paunch bobbing before him.

"I'm afraid he's sore at us," said Bulnes. "But what else could I have done?"

"Dash it all," said Flin. "You shouldn't have gone at him hammer-and-tongs like that. What shall we do now?"

Bulnes shrugged. "Follow his advice and ask Protagoras, I suppose."

PROTAGORAS, when sought out next day, proved no more satisfactory than Sokrates. The sophist drew himself up to his full height (about that of Flin) and said:

"My good men, you ask me to help set you up in competition with myself, and to divide with you the pupils I have attracted—or, I should say, who have at last recognized the worth of my teachings after my many years of neglect? And being, moreover, not even Hellenes, but Barbarians whose Greek I can barely understand? Are you mad? Be off! I have no time for lunatics!"

Bulnes listened to the tirade with eyebrows raised in an expression of mild surprise. When it was over he tossed the loose end of his himation over his shoulder and said:

"Thank you, my dear Protagoras. Even if you cannot fulfill our request, you have give us free a valuable lessons in the greatness of soul to be found in Athens. Come, Philon." And with a dignity surpassing that of Protagoras he turned his back and started off.

"Gentlemen!" said a soft voice.

A young man, who had been sitting behind one of the pillars, now spoke to Bulnes. He looked to be about thirty, with a fuzzy young beard and a nervous smile playing around his mouth.

"Something?" said Bulnes.

"Yes, if you—ah—if you really do not mind," said the young man. "I realize of course that I have no right to force myself upon you . . ."

"Come to the point, my dear sir," said Bulnes.

"Well—ah—if you will forgive me, I overheard your exchange with Protagoras—not that I would say anything against the great Protagoras—but—ah—I do not know how to say it . . ."

Bulnes said: "Come, come, begin at the beginning. There are no need to be shy with us."

"That is good of you, but what I am trying to say is that if you are the Tartessian philosophers, and are seriously looking for pupils, I—ah—would you consider me? I realize that you are men of importance in your own land, but then I have studied under Protagoras and Leukippos, and have spent seven years in Egypt, so you will not find me utterly unworthy of your efforts."

"Gladly," said Bulnes, partly masking his joy. "If you would care to come with us back to our inn we will discuss terms and hours."

"Demokritos!" cried the voice of Protagoras behind them. "By Herakles, where have you been? Nobody in Athens has seen you. When did you get here?"

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"Oh," said the young man. "Truly I am sorry if I have inconvenienced you, O Protagoras, but I did not wish to burst in on one of your invaluable lectures."

"But why have you not made yourself known to Sokrates or Diogenes or our other colleagues?"

Demokritos dug patterns in the dirt with the toe of his sandal. "I—I could not force myself upon them. They are godlike men of established reputation . . ."

"Nonsense! You are as wise as any, however you try to dissemble the fact. What are you doing with these Tartessians?"

"I thought—that is to say—they are offering courses and have kindly consented to enroll me."

"The hawk takes flying-lessons from the chicken. Well, strangers, any time you find the Greek language too much for you and wish to share with me the money you will extract from Demokritos, I will consider brushing up your speech. After all it is I who first classified the parts of speech and formulated the rules of grammar. Meanwhile, rejoice!"

PROTAGORAS went back to his pupils while Demokritos, beaming, walked away with Bulnes and Flin. The latter said:

"*We're* going to teach *Demokritos?* Gah!"

"What of it, if he can pay?"

"It's like teaching Newton or Einstein! This modest lad has one of the greatest brains of all time!"

"My dear Wiyem, only last night we learned he's *not* Demokritos at all, but a modern man impers—"

"Nothing of the sort! Vasil could have found some way of warping time to bring Periklean Greece forward instead of sending us back! One's no more incredible than the other."

"You're an incorrigible rationalizer, Bil. Personally I've never been convinced of either. I think it's all a hoax."

"Oh, no! Not that! Perhaps—d'you know the theory of alternate time-streams? We might be in another time-stream which follows the same course as our own, but three thousand years later. So this world has only evolved as far as the Periklean Age, whereas our own—"

"Suit yourself, comrade." Bulnes turned to the Greek. "My colleague and I were discussing what sort of course to gives you. Perhaps you would like lectures on Tartessian theories of the shape and motion of the earth?"

"That would be most exciting!"

"Or the nature of matter?"

"Better yet!" cried Demokritos, and to the astonishment and embarrassment of Bulnes seized his hand and kissed it. "You gentlemen are much too kind. Perhaps it will interest you to compare your theory with that which I received from my master Leukippos, and to which I have made a few trifling additions of my own."

"What theory is that?"

"I call it the atomic theory, from the 'atoms' or tiny indivisible particles of which we suppose things to be made. It is my notion that whereas some of these atoms are smooth, so that they slide freely past each other as in fluids, others are provided with hooks by which they become entagled in fixed masses, as we see in solids . . ."

Later, when Demokritos had departed, Flin said: "Look here, Knut, there's no sense in having both of us hang around the inn while he's here. One's enough for lecturing."

"You'd like to handle it alone?"

"No, no, on the contrary; you lecture while I hunt my wife."

"What? Don't be ridiculous, my friend. I can't speak the language well enough."

"Certainly you can. You're perfectly competent. All you need is confidence, and you'll never learn to do by yourself while I'm here to translate. We'll run over the talk now, and everything'll be top-hole."

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"What have you in mind?"

"We'll rough out the first lecture this evening, and tomorrow you'll take care of him while I search for Thalia."

"How will you do that, if all the women are locked up?"

"It's not quite so bad as that. There are some occasions that bring them out: religious ceremonials, of which there are a good many, and the performance of tragedies. O Podokles!"

"You wish?" said the innkeeper.

"When we left the Peiraieus they were just about to play the Dionysiac tragedies, and they told us these plays would be shown in Athens in a few days. When is that to be?"

Podokles pondered, counting on his fingers. "Today is the seventh of Elaphebolion . . . therefore the first one will be the day after tomorrow. By Sophokles, I am told."

"Are you going?"

"Yes, if nothing prevents."

"Would you like a companion?"

Podokles gave Flin one of his suspicious looks. "As a foreigner you would have to pay to get in."

"I know. Let us consider it a date, then. What happens tomorrow, if anything?"

"A special assembly of the citizens, to ratify Perikles's new treaty. You cannot attend, you know."

"There you are," said Flin to Bulnes. "You lecture, I hunt. And don't feel badly about missing the play; you'd find it a weird business with those masks and stilts anyway."

BULNES, though he realized that he was the natural leader of the pair, felt lost without Flin when Demokritos showed up for his lecture. To one whose command of the language was still so imperfect, it was comforting to have the little man around when one got stuck.

Demokritos closed the session by saying: "Before I go, Bouleus, I—I thought perhaps you—ah—would consider another pupil?"

"Certainly. Whom?"

"Kritias Kallaischrou, the son of my host. When I applied to the proxenos having charge of visitors from Abdera, he arranged for me to stay at the house of Kallaischros."

"That sounds good."

"However—it embarrasses me to say it—there is one matter—I trust you will forgive my impertinence . . ."

Bulnes sighed. "I forgive everything in advance, if you will—uh—only come to the point."

"The family, being among the richest in Athens, would not dream of entering an inn. You would have to come to the house of Kallaischros."

"That would be agreeable. Will you conduct me there tomorrow?"

Demokritos assented and departed; shortly thereafter Flin came in with an odd look on his face.

"Kritias Kallaischrou?" he said when Bulnes had told him the news. "That must be the 'Kritias' of Plato's dialogues; an uncle or cousin of Plato. Brilliant, but a frightful bounder in politics. However he'll be only a young fellow now."

"What happened to you?" said Bulnes.

"Just had an odd experience. I spoke to Perikles."

"Do tell! What happened?"

Flin chewed his lip and stared into space. "Dash it all. I knew there'd be no women at the *Ekklesia*, but I wanted to see what I could. So I went over to the Pnyx. Of course since I didn't have a citizen's pass the Scythians wouldn't let me in, but I hung around the entrance and heard much of what went on inside. Perikles put over his treaty, though the demagogues raised a row about knuckling under the Sparta. Then the president of the session adjourned the meeting, and out they came. I picked out a good-looking gray-haired chap in the midst of the first lot. I had a feeling I'd seen him somewhere, and wondered what he'd look like without the shrubbery on his face. The others were

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all talking at once and waving their hands, but not this one; very quiet and composed.

"Some other man brushed past and shouted something about his having betrayed the interests of the people, and there'd have been a jolly good row if the Scythians hadn't broken it up. But from what they said I knew the dignified chap was Perikles, and the other, a big fat individual, was Kleon the Tanner, one of his left-wing opponents.

"I took my courage in my hands and stepped up to him, saying: 'Perikles Xanthippou, may I have a word?' 'Speak,' he said. 'I'm told,' I said, 'that a group of the radical opposition are planning to attack you through your friends. Specifically they're going to trump up charges against Anaxagoras, Pheidias, and Aspasia.'

"He took it more coolly than I'd expected; just looked me up and down and said: 'Who are you?' 'Philon of Tartessos,' I told him. He said: 'You seem well-informed for a foreigner. Be assured that I also keep track of current affairs.' And off he went, leaving me feeling foolish. I still can't get over that feeling I know the man. Blast it, I begin to think you're right, that this is all a masquerade. I could cry, I'm so disappointed."

"Cheer up, my dear colleague," said Bulnes. "Suppose this were the real Periklean Athens. Then, even if you found your Thalia, what could you do then? How could you get back to your own time? Assuming you wish to, of course."

"You may assume," said Flin gloomily. "I've seen enough of Periklean Athens in the raw to last me some time. I say, you haven't a cig—there, see what I mean?"

THE house of Kallaischros proved larger and better-appointed than that of Meton, though laid out on the same general plan. Demokritos said to Bulnes:

"This is your new pupil, Kritias, and this is my host, the noble Kallaischros."

"Rejoice!" said Bulnes. "This are—is—a great pleasure."

"How do you like our violet-crowned city?" said Kallaischros.

"Magnificent!" said Bulnes. "Its institutions, also, I find most advanced and interesting. Perhaps we could—uh—apply some of them to advantage with Tartessos."

Kallaischros snorted. "Not if you know what is good for you. Democracy! Pah!"

"The regime of Perikles, then, does not meet with universal approval?"

"That man in the Odeion!" shouted Kallaischros. "Why anyone, reared in one of our best families, with every advantage, should turn traitor to his class in order to curry popularity with the base ignorant rabble—"

"Do not get excited, Father," said Kritias, a sleek fuzzy-faced youth with a pet monkey on his shoulder. "It is bad for you."

"—to experiment with our sacred constitution, to waste the Delian treasury on an extravagant program of unnecessary public works—"

"Father!"

Bulnes said: "But, sir, I should think that you, as a Eupatrid, would approve this new agreement with Sparta?"

"The treaty I approve, but without condonation of its author. If Perikles thinks he can crawl back into the good graces of the better sort of people by a last-minute repentance—"

"Father!"

"You are right, son. I should not even think of politics, this vulgar demagogy makes me so furious. It was not like this when I was young . . . but to your lessons."

Bulnes found the day wearing. While Demokritos, though brilliant, was a docile, modest, and sweet-tempered pupil, Kritias proved a scholar of a different sort: a bumptious, argumentative, sharp-tongued youth who took delight in embarrassing his teacher. When Bulnes fell afoul of the complexities of Classical

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Greek, Kritias would solemnly tell his monkey: "He mixes his case-endings just like a milk-drinking barbarian, does he not?" And the monkey would wag its little head in a Greek affirmative.

By noon, when the lecture ended, Bulnes was glad to get back to the inn of Podokles to sprawl on a bench and drink a pint of wine with his lunch. He was feeling slightly drunk and delightfully relaxed when a shabby youth came in, peering around until he sighted Bulnes. Bulnes thought he looked familiar, but could not place him until the newcomer, approaching, said: "My master sends me—"

"Oh, you are Dromon, the slave of Sokrates?"

"That is right. Sokrates sends me to tell you that your friend, the other Tartessian, is in the House."

"In what house?"

"In the *desmoterion*, of course."

"What is that?"

Dromon sighed his exasperation. "A place where evil-doers are kept before they are tried."

"In jail?" Bulnes jumped up. "In the name of Zeus, why?"

"I do not know. He made some disturbance at the play, and the Scythians carried him off."

XI

THE "HOUSE" stood at the north end of the Agora—a small nondescript mud-brick building whose rooms opened outward. In one of these stinking cells sat Wiyem Flin, shackled to a ring in the wall by a fetter on one ankle.

"So there you are!" cried Flin when he saw Bulnes. "Where the devil have you been? I've sat here hours and I'm jolly well starved. I should think you could have come here a little more promptly."

"I'm sorry," said Bulnes. "I came as soon as I heard." His jaw-muscles tightened with suppressed irritation.

"Well, why didn't you start hunting when I didn't come back from the play on time? It's just like you never to think of anyone but yourself. And why haven't you brought some lunch "

"Don't they feed you here?"

"Of course not. Any ass knows that. Why didn't you—"

"My dear sir," said Bulnes, eyeing the little man coldly, "I've done the best I could, and if you're going to be a bustard I'll simply go away until you stop. Do I make myself clear?"

Flin growled something unintelligible, which Bulnes took for capitulation. He asked: "What happened this time?"

"It wasn't really my fault; you'd have done the same if you weren't such a cold-blooded—"

"Get to the point, please."

"Blast it, I'm trying to tell you! Don't interrupt again. I went to the performance of *Aias* with Podokles and saw Thalia in the women's section, as I thought I might."

"You did! Are you sure it was the right woman?"

"I ought to know my own wife after being married for eleven years! When the play was over I hurried to the exit and stopped Thalia on her way out. 'Thalia!' I said. 'I'm here!' She looked at me blankly and replied, in Greek, that she didn't understand—*'Ouk' oida.'* So I repeated what I'd said in that language.

"She said: 'You've made a mistake; my name isn't Thalia.' 'Oh, yes it is,' I said. 'I'm Melitē the wife of Euripides Mnesarchou,' she said. 'Go away and stop bothering me.' And she started to brush past me. I lost my head a bit, I suppose, and caught her wrist, saying: 'Thalia, don't you know your own husband?' Then she screamed for help, and the next thing I knew a couple of the Scythians had grasped my arms and hauled me out under the direction of a tall chap with a tremendous long beard. This, it turned out, was Euripides himself, the great playwright.

"One thing about a small town like this, it doesn't take you long to get from place to place. It can't have been ten minutes before those coppers had

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marched me all the way from the theater to the Agora, where the Polemarchos holds forth. We had to wait at the Epiloukeion for the Polemarchos to show up. When he did come, Euripides laid a complaint before him of second-degree assault or something of the sort. The Polemarchos asked me if I had anything to say, and I was so rattled by that time I could only babble about Thalia's being really my wife and not that of Euripides. So the Polemarchos ordered me confined under a bail of five mnai pending my trial. What are you going to do about it?"

A tart sentence formed in Bulnes' mind, asking Flin why he should do anything for a damned fool, but with his usual self-control the Spaniard merely said: "Five mnai, eh? That's five hundred drachmai, which would be about—ah—seventy-five to a hundred krauns in modern money. Not unreasonable, I suppose, but much more than I have."

"Why not ask one of your pupils? Demokritos seems pretty well upholstered, and Kritias is simply rolling in the stuff."

"An idea, comrade. Definitely an idea."

"How'd you find out about me?" asked Flin.

"Sokrates sent his slave to tell me."

"He did? Dashed decent, considering how vexed he was with us. That's the real Sokrates for you."

"Yes?" said Bulnes, cocking a skeptical eyebrow. "We shall see about that. Meanwhile I'll get you some lunch and then go see about raising bail."

"Hurry up about it," said Flin. "If I'm knocked on the head and thrown into the Barathron it'll be all your fault. And none of that beastly barley-porridge, mind you!"

BULNES, wondering what he had done to deserve so unreasonable a companion, departed rather than argue the point. In the Agora he bought a loaf of bread, a bunch of mixed vegetables, and a cheap cup and plate to hold the victuals. He filled the cup at a public fountain and carried the meal back to Flin, who sneered at it but fell ravenously to eating.

Bulnes then hiked to the house of Kallaischros and asked for Demokritos. Since not Kallaischros nor Kritias nor Demokritos was in, the porter told Bulnes: "The young men have gone to the Kynosarges."

Bulnes set out on his weary way again. Outside the Diomean Gate, near the great unfinished Olympieion, lay the Kynosarges, a small park. The Scythian at the entrance looked Bulnes over to see that he bore no slave-brands and waved him on in. Bulnes passed a couple of altars and came to a large quadrangle comprising a gym-building and a series of porticoes.

In and around the quadrangle naked men were running, jumping, wrestling, and otherwise exerting themselves. Bulnes (who took a dim view of calisthenics) passed them by, for they reminded him that he possessed the beginnings of a middle-aged paunch, which he somehow never found time, energy, or will-power to train back. At length he located Demokritos in a huddle under one of the porticoes. The young man was engaged in a game of Greek checkers, with several kibitzers standing around.

Demokritos looked up and said: "Rejoice, my dear Bouleus! I shall be through here directly, as soon as I have forced this man's stones off the sacred line."

He made a move, and his opponent said: "That does it. Away with you, man of Abdera! Tychē is too good for you."

As the group broke up a voice said: "The Tartessian professor! What can we do for you here?" It was Kritias with dirt on his face and his skin glistening with oil. "How would three falls out of five suit you? Come now—"

"If you please, gentlemen," said Bulnes. "I am here on more serious business. My colleague is in prison."

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KRITIAS laughed loudly. "That is good. What has he done, broken into the treasure of Athenë Parthenos?"

Bulnes smiled. "Not so serious as that, but vexatious nevertheless."

He thereupon began the story he had been rehearsing: one of those crafty concoctions with enough truth in it to be difficult to disprove:

"When we dwelt in Tartessos my colleague Philon had a wife on whom he doted. But on an evil day a Carthaginian galley raided the coast near our city for slaves and caught my poor friend's wife. Ever since then he has been little mad on this one subject. When he sees a woman he think looks like his wife, he will have it that it is indeed she and tries to claim her."

"And he has been claiming the wife of one of our people?" said Kritias.

"Exactly so. It was at the play this morning, and the victim was the wife of Euripides the playwright, who had my friend thrown in jail for making a disturbance."

"That will teach him," said Kritias.

Demokritos said: "On the contrary, it proves my point, my dear Kritias. You will remember my saying that in an ideal commonwealth slavery would not be allowed."

"Nonsense!" said Kritias. "Without slaves who would do the work? We, of course, and we should therefore have no time for sports, art, science, and literature. Besides, it is logical that we wise and brave Hellenes should rule the stupid Northerners and the cowardly Southerners. But—what is to be done?"

Bulnes said: "First, he is in jail on bail of five mnai, which I do not have."

Demokritos and Kritias looked at one another. The former said: "I am sorry, but when I planned this trip to Athens I did not allow for such an unexpected expense. However, it is otherwise with you, O Kritias."

"We do not after all know these Tartessians very well," said Kritias.

Demokritos said: "Oh, I think we can trust Bouleus. He stands to gain more from this lecture-course than by letting his friend jump bail."

"Fair enough," said Kritias. "If you will remind me when you appear for the lecture tomorrow, Bouleus, the money shall be given you."

Bulnes said: "Thank you, my dear friends. However, while I dislike exceedingly to seem ungrateful, my poor colleague am still in the House with a fetter on his leg. You have not the sum with you, have you?"

"My dear man," said Kritias, "I do not carry the family patrimony on my back as an invitation to every footpad in Athens. And as I do not wish to leave my exercise here, you will have to wait till tomorrow."

"I see," said Bulnes, his smile becoming a bit glassy. "Perhaps you could advise me what to do next?"

Kritias said: "Your best chance, I should say, would be to persuade the complainant to withdraw his complaint. Did you say he was Euripides the poet?"

"Yes. Where is he to be found?"

"He has a house in the Peiraieus, but most of his time he spends on Salamis. The man is said to be a worse recluse than Timon. Rejoice!" And Kritias strolled off.

THE SUN had sunk low when Bulnes knocked on the door of the house of Euripides in Peiraieus. It had taken him over an hour to walk down from Athens, and another half-hour to locate the house by incessant questioning, for most streets had no names and house-numbers had not even been thought of.

The spy-hole opened. "No, the master is not in."

"When do you expect him?"

"I do not know. Who are you?"

"Bouleus of Tartessos."

"What do you want?"

"I should like to discuss the regrettable incident of this morning at the Dionysia."

"You mean when the barbarian tried to kidnap the mistress?"

"Yes," said Bulnes.

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"You will have to come back later."

Bulnes said: "Look, I have just walked down from Athens. May I at least come in to rest for a few minutes?"

"No, I cannot admit anybody in the master's absence! Go away!"

Bulnes was about to stalk away when he heard voices raised in disputation, and then the same slave's face appeared again at the hole. "The mistress says you may come in."

The mistress of the house awaited him in the Andronitis. Bulnes looked hard at her as he came forward. It was Thalia, all right, perfectly recognizable despite her long chiton and the silver tiara on her glossy-black hair: a woman in her mid-thirties, still attractive in a lush full-blown way. Although he had not disliked Flin's wife, back in England, he had never taken much to her either: quite intelligent, but a garrulous and gossipy female, and definitely the dominating half of the couple.

He looked her in the eye for any spark of recognition, but saw none. Instead she gave him the hand-wave that here took the place of a handshake and said:

"Rejoice, good Bouleus. Euripides will be home in an hour or so, and meanwhile there is no point in your wandering the Peiraieus like the ghost of an unburied corpse. Sosias, fetch a stool for the gentleman, and a small stoup of wine. (See his frown; he thinks your presence here will compromise me.) And rout out Euages to take the ferry over to Salamis and tell the master he has a visitor." She turned back to Bulnes. "I understand you have come on behalf of the other Tartessian, he who accosted me this morning?"

"Yes," said Bulnes, sitting down gratefully.

"Whatever possessed the man to act so? Is he mad?"

Bulnes told Thalia-Melitë the same tale he had told his pupils.

"The poor fellow!" she said. "I am sure that under this circumstance Euripides will withdraw the complaint. My husband has a good heart if you can get him down from the clouds long enough."

"I am told," said Bulnes, "that Euripides spends most of his time on Salamis?"

"Yes, the old dotard! Every morning before dawn he and Kephisophon take their boat across the channel, with one of the slaves to row, and there they spend the day scribbling. He claims he cannot concentrate in a house full of wives and children and slaves, which is ridiculous. As if his wretched plays were more important than his own household."

"Who is Kephisophon?"

"His secretary. The Euripides is becoming one of the standard sights of Athens, along with the Akropolis and the ship of the divine Theseus. I am told guides harangue visitors about him: 'And there, gentlemen, is the island of Salamis, scene of the great sea-fight against the trousered Mede, and there is the cave of the eminent poet Euripides. If you look sharply you can see Euripides himself in the entrance, no doubt working on some sublime new drama'."

"A man thoroughly absorbed in his work?" said Bulnes, to make polite conversation.

"Absorbed! Why, he will not take the time to buy food for the house, which every man in Athens does as a matter of course, and as a result the slaves swindle us right and left. Personally I think little of these Attic customs, but one must conform to some degree."

"You are not an Athenian?"

"Yes and no. My parents were, so I rank as a citizen, but my father was ostracized and spent his exile in hollow Lakedaimon, where I was reared. There women are personalities in their own right."

"You must find it quite a contrast."

"Contrast!" she leaned forward on her stool. "Many a time I have thought I should go mad. Danaë in her tower had no more frustrating lot, locked up with no company but a husband old enough to be my father, and occasional visits from these vapid Athenian dames

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—I, who as a young girl ran and wrestled naked on the athletic-field like a man . . ."

During this conversation she had been hitching her stool further and further forward, and now was gently pressing her thigh against his. Her face was flushed, breath coming fast, dark eyes half-closed and mouth half-open. All the slaves seemed to have vanished. *Sacrosanta madre; she acts as if . . .*

Bulnes's own pulse began to pound—but then he thought of the enormous complications and decided to be good—this once anyway. Another time . . . .

He drew back stiffly, saying: "Tell me, what is Euripides working on now? For rumors of his fame have reached far Tartessos."

"Oh," she said, with a look that expressed regret for having admitted this stick of a foreigner in the first place. "Some huge tetralogy; I never keep track of his works . . . ."

XII

THE STREET-DOOR opened and in came a man as tall as Bulnes, with bushy eyebrows, a patriarchal nose, and a graying beard down to his solar plexus. Behind him, a younger man with a mass of papyrus-rolls under his arm looked askance at Bulnes, though the older one seemed to find nothing amiss.

"Boleus of Tartessos? Bouleus of Tartessos? Do I know you, my dear fellow? Thank you, Melitë, but you had better go back into the Gynaikonitis like a good girl. What did you say your name was, my dear sir?"

Bulnes told him again.

"Ah, yes, I remember. Why, you scoundrel, you are the barbarian who caused such an unseemly disturbance this mor—but no, that cannot be, because you are tall and thin like me, whereas this man was short and thick like Kephisophon. Was he not from Tartessos too? Do you know him?"

Bulnes told his prepared story.

"Ah, yes, that is the way of it. It shows the inscrutible workings of Fate, for if Melitë had not had a cold last week she would have seen the *Aias* at the local theater, and I should not have had to convey her all the way to Athens. How did you hear of this regrettable incident?"

"Our friend Sokrates sent his slave to inform me."

"Do you mean Sokrates Sophroniskou the Philosopher?"

"Yes."

"Why did you not say so at once? Sokrates is an old and valued friend of mine, and any friend of his is welcome. What did you think of the play?"

"I have not seen it," said Bulnes.

"Oh, that is right, you are not the man who attended it and accosted my wife. What do you say his name is? Philon of Tartessos. Ah, yes. A wonderful tragedian, the Sophokles, do you not think? We are friendly rivals, you know."

"Why are you not competing?"

"Because I could not finish my tetralogy in time. I am so wretchedly absent-minded, I forgot the date comes early this year."

"Really?" said Bulnes, glad to remember some of the lectures on Greek drama that Wiyem Flin had inflicted upon him. "Is one of the plays about the witch Medeia?"

"Why, yes . . . how could you know?"

"It seemed likely. You see, I know the general plot of that myth. It has penetrated even to Tartessos, as has your own poetic reputation."

"Yes, you are quite a literate and civilized people, are you not? I hope to work in a good word in the *Medeia* for regarding barbarians as fellow human beings. Could I read you some of the passages we worked out today?"

"I should be honored."

"Very well, Kephisophon, find that section where Iason offers Medeia to provide for her after their divorce . . . ah, here we are."

And the dramatist began tramping back and forth in the court, orating,

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waving his manuscript, and flapping his himation:

"Oh, peace! Enough
Of these vain wars: I will no more thereof.
If thou wilt take of all that I possess
Aid for these babes and thine own helplessness. . . ."

His incredible beard lashed the spring air. Every few minutes he would turn on Bulnes with:

"How do you like that?"

BULNES made comments as intelligent as his limited knowledge of the art and command of the language permitted, and even suggested a trifling change or two. Then a slave came out of the gynaeceum and whispered into the ear of Euripides.

"Ah, I forgot again! Hippodamos is coming for dinner!" said the poet. "My dear fellow, I hate to rush you off this way, but you know how it is. Here, take a piece of manuscript with you to read. I should like your criticism, since you seem well-informed in such matters. Kephisophon, find the rough draft of the opening scene and give it to Bouleus. You understand, though, Bouleus, that the final version is considerably improved."

"Thank you," said Bulnes. "But excuse me . . ."

"Oh, yes, there was something else you wished to see me about. Now what was it? Do not tell me; let me guess. Ahem. What was it?"

"About my friend in the jail. Will you withdraw the complaint?"

"Certainly, now that you have explained it. What was your explanation? No matter. Let me see; I shall not go to Athens soon again, but I will write a letter tomorrow and send it to the Polemarchos by a slave. Remind me of that, Kephisophon. And now rejoice, my foreign friend, and do not fail to let me know your opinion of the play."

Bulnes stepped out into the broad street and started back towards Athens. His rest had much strengthened him, and now if he could only get a bite to eat . . . he stopped as he passed the Hippodamian Agora and bought a small loaf and a sausage (to hell with trichinosis, he thought) and a scoop of mustard. With these he made a fair approximation of an American hot-dog.

He resumed his hike, holding his loaf with one hand and munching, and the roll of manuscript with the other. The sausage seemed to be made mainly of blood and tripe, not bad but not very tasty either. He shook out the scroll and held it up to read by the pink light of the setting sun. Hell, he thought, all the words run together. As if Greek weren't hard enough to read with the words separated!

He rolled the manuscript up, tucked it under his arm, and set off again; a man stepped out from behind a building, deftly snatched the scroll out from under Bulnes's arm, and ran like the devil.

"Hey!" roared Bulnes. "Come back here!"

He looked around; not a Scythian in sight. He started running after the thief, who doubled around a couple of corners and almost lost his pursuer.

The man's chiton bobbed ahead in the twilight, heading for one of the gates. He flew through and Bulnes pounded after him, sandals slapping. Although Bulnes was hardly in shape for a five-mile run, his fury at the bustard's impertinence kept him going. Moreover he would have an embarrassing time explaining the disappearance of the manuscript.

THE THIEF was evidently a younger man, for he pulled steadily ahead of Bulnes on the road for Athens. He splashed through the ford across the Kephisos, half-fell, recovered, and limped when he came out of the water on the far side. Evidently he had sprained an ankle. Bulnes, blown and panting, regretted that it wasn't his neck.

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The chase continued, both walking. When Bulnes's greater length of leg brought him closer to the thief, the latter broke into a limping run and widened the distance again. Little by little, despite the other man's sprints, Bulnes pulled up on him.

The stars came out, and jackals yapped across the Attic plain, and still the chase continued.

The thief reached the Peiraic Gate of Athens about fifty meters ahead of Bulnes, whose hope that the guards would stop the man were again disappointed.

But they did stop Bulnes. "What you doing?" said a couple in pidgin-Greek, closing in on him in the dark. "Gate closed for night."

"I am chasing that thief! Come along with me."

"No thief. Who you? Maybe you thief, huh?"

Either they were determined to be stupid, or were in league with the thief. Bulnes noted that one of them had left his unstrung bow leaning against the wall.

Bulnes snatched up the bowstave. *Whonk! Whonk!* went the wood against the pointed Scythian caps. One archer sat down; the other fell forward to hands and knees. Bulnes raced out the other end of the enclosure, his tired feet speeded by the uproar behind him. Soon Scythian boots sounded on the dirt.

As he did not think he could outrun the entire Athenian police-force, Bulnes slipped around the first corner, threw away the bow-stave, rearranged his himation, and started back the way he had come, towards the Peiraic Gate, like any other stroller out for a turn in the evening. A group of Scythians went past, asking each other loudly which way the scoundrel had gone. Bulnes let them bump him up against the side of the house, made a vague gesture in response to their questions, and watched them scatter around corners and disappear.

Meantime he had lost track of his quarry. Bulnes wrote off the manuscript as lost and set out wearily for the Agora. He would have to get another meal for Flin before turning in for the night.

He had gone only a few blocks when he spied a man sitting by the side of the street in the dirt, ahead of him, with his back against the stucco house-wall and exhaustion writ in every line of his posture. As Bulnes came in sight, however, the man heaved himself to his feet, pushed the hair out of his eyes, and started walking ahead of Bulnes, also towards the Agora. He limped and carried a roll of papyrus.

Although it was now too dark to recognize faces at that distance, Bulnes felt sure this was his thief. This time, however, instead of rushing upon the man, he thought it wiser to tail him. There must be some peculiar reason for the man's snatching the roll; it was not the sort of booty that the average thief would go for.

The man continued steadily southeast, skirting the Agora, where the wicker kiosks had all been folded up for the night. As the man reached the south end of the Agora he bore left, towards the east end of the Akropolis, which towered against the stars in front of Bulnes.

PRESENTLY the man came to a small enclosure, a kind of one-block park. Bulness remembered the day Flin had dragged him all over the Akropolis. The little teacher had pointed out this enclosure as the Theseion, or shrine of Theseus, the leading legendary hero of the city of Athens.

The Theseion had a thick hedge around it. The thief hobbled along this for a way, then ducked through a hole in the shrubbery. Bulnes followed in time to see the man disappearing into a small building among the trees and statues. This edifice was the shrine of Theseus: a squarish structure open at one side, with a row of columns across the entrance. Bulnes ran on tiptoe to the entrance and peered around one end of the

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building-wall into the interior.

Inside he could dimly make out mural paintings on the walls, an altar, and a primitive-looking cult-statue on a pedestal. The thief was standing with his back to him, watching the ground behind the altar.

With a whirr of invisible machinery the altar began to tilt forward. A line of light appeared along its base. The altar seemed to be fastened to the top of a trapdoor that was now opening. It nodded forward until it almost touched the ground, and the trapdoor was vertical.

The thief stepped into the opening and began to go down a flight of steps. One—two—three—only his upper half was in sight; then only his head; then nothing. The altar began to rise toward its former vertical position.

Bulnes rushed over to the trapdoor. He caught a glimpse of movement and a snatch of speech. He was sure the place below was electrically lighted, but by lamps so shaded that he could see but little. The altar rose, the lighted area contracting to a wedge.

Bulnes thought desperately of sticking his foot in the trapdoor; but if the door were power-operated the result might be hard on the foot. Then, just before the light disappeared, he snatched out his sheath-knife and thrust the hilt between the closing trapdoor and its frame. The movement stopped with a jar, leaving the altar of Theseus leaning at a slight angle.

Bulnes reflected that there was probably some code of raps or words by which the thief—a pretty well-connected sort of thief too—announced his presence. He put his ear to the crack. Voices still came from below. He thought that the language was English, spoken in a variety of accents.

Bulnes put his shoulder against the altar and pushed. To his surprise it gave. Not readily, but a centimeter at a time. Meanwhile small mechanical sounds came from beneath his feet as the machinery was forced to run in reverse. The minute he let go, the altar started to tip back upright again.

He put his full strength into it. Down went the altar, slowly, with a creak and a whirr. Up from the depths came the voices of two men: ". . . 'ow the bloody 'ell was I to know?"

"Mr. God! Can you not the instructions remember?"

"They didn't cover this case."

"The sector-super vill hell raise."

"But 'e was the blighter oo told me to get that bleeding manuscript at all costs. It seems they want to compare . . . ."

Bulnes took a quick look. One of the men was standing at the base of the steps with his back to Bulnes. The gods were really too kind this time; the shouting of the disputants had drowned out the sound of the opening of the trapdoor.

In a swift movement Bulnes threw off his himation, picked up his knife from the ground beside the hatch-frame, and leaped for the back of the nearer man.

XIII

AS HIS feet struck the man's back, Knut Bulnes brought his right fist down on the fellow's head in a hammer-blow. The pommel of his knife hit the man's close-cut hair, and the man collapsed.

Bulnes sprang away as the body fell forward and rolled on its side. He lit lightly on the concrete floor, having just time to observe that, whereas the small thief was dressed in on Ionic chiton (essentially a big flour-sack with holes for arms and head) the man he had just felled wore a blue-denim shirt to which was pinned a large identification-badge with photograph, and a pair of work-pants held up by a belt with loops through which were thrust screw-drivers and similar tools.

The other man, however, more urgently claimed his attention, for he dropped a similar badge, which he had been in the act of pinning to his garment, and pulled out a knife that had

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been strapped to his thigh under the skirt of his chiton.

Bulnes's instincts warned him not to admit that he was anything other than one more pseudo-Periklean Hellene intent upon getting his stolen property back. Accordingly he said, in Classical Greek: "Give me that, you thief!"

At the same time he advanced, knife ready. The little man moved, not towards Bulnes, but at an angle, towards the corner in which the blond man had been sitting. In this nook there was an office chair, a shelf on which lay a clip-board with sheets of paper attached, and a small litter of pencils, paper-clips, and the like. Above the shelf, on the wall, was a panel with a telephone mouthpiece and many buttons and switches.

The thief limped towards the corner, menacing Bulnes with the dagger in one hand while reaching with the other for the buttons. Bulnes guessed that he meant to push an alarm-button and with a feline leap sprang in front of the panel.

The thief, however, came right at Bulnes, the dagger held stiffly in front of him like a fencer's foil. Bulnes knocked the man's forearm aside, and the man, coming on headlong, impaled himself on Bulnes's own knife, which slid between his ribs up to the hilt. The impetus of the man's lunge drove Bulnes's arm back. Bulnes shoved hard and thrust the man backward. The thief fell supine, dead eyes staring upward, while a rapidly widening spot of blood stained the front of his chiton.

Now, thought Bulnes, he was in for it. His stabbing of the two gangsters in the Peiraieus on the night of his arrival might be excused as self-defense; but that excuse, though equally valid, might not go down for the killing of this character, who, being one of "them," must have some official status.

Far from any feeling of triumph, Bulnes took a morose view of the whole business. Aside from the fact that he might be adjudged a murderer by the mysterious Them, he regarded himself as a poised and resourceful fellow who by foresight and diplomacy could attain his end without resort to crude violence—despite the fact that his fondness for adventuring along the water-fronts of the world's tougher seaports had several times involved him in similar affrays.

A QUICK check showed the small man dead and the large one alive and likely to regain consciousness at any time. Bulnes scooped up the papyrus roll and started up the steps down which he had come . . . to realize that the trapdoor was again closed.

He placed a hand against its underside and pushed. No result. Harder—still none. He remembered the automatic-closing feature of the opening, and that it had taken all his strength, applied with much greater leverage to the top of the altar, to open it before. Moreover it probably had an automatic-locking mechanism.

He came back down the steps and examined the panel over the shelf in the corner. There was one big red button labeled "Djen. El." ("General Alarm"), several smaller ones bearing such cryptic abbreviations as "Kor." and "Tra.," and others identified by numbers or letters alone. There was no way to tell, without instruction, which buttons worked the trapdoor.

Bulnes looked up and down the tunnel. For the most part it was lined with bare concrete, sloping slightly up in one direction and down in the other. Across the tunnel from the seat stood a full-length mirror, and next to it a branch tunnel went off in the direction of the Peiraieus. In the down direction, a few meters away, an object stood in a niche in the wall. As he walked toward it Bulnes saw that it was a large rack holding six light machine-guns. The guns stood like a row of the Emperor's guards, butt-plates in slots at the bottom and muzzles projecting up through holes in the top, secured by a steel bar that ran horizontally

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through their trigger-guards. At one end the bar projected through a hole in the side of the rack, and at the other it entered a lock. Bulnes tried the bar with his fingers, but it was firmly fixed in place.

However, perhaps something could be done with the rack as a whole. When he heaved on it, it leaned slightly. Though heavy, it was not immovable. By repeated tugging he hauled it out from the wall, though not so far as to clear its ends from the niche. Then he went back to his bodies.

First he appropriated the dead man's identification-badge. Then he removed the chiton from the body of the thief and cut it into strips. With these he gagged the other man and bound his wrists and ankles. He dragged the fellow down the tunnel, heaved him to shoulder-height with straining muscles, and pushed him over the top of the gun-rack. The man's body fell with a multiple thump to the floor behind the rack.

Then Bulnes went back, picked up the naked corpse of the thief, and shoved it after his first victim. There was not much room between the rack and the wall behind, and Bulnes had to reach over the top of the rack and wrestle with the corpse to make it lie down out of sight and not leave a pallid foot sticking up.

Panting, he looked again about him. So long as he was stuck underground he might as well explore a little and learn as much as he could in the course of looking for another outlet. For this was evidently where They had their lair.

He again picked up the manuscript of Euripides and started down the tunnel. Beyond the gun-rack the tunnel bent slightly, and around the bend he came upon another alcove in which stood two shiny motor-scooters. Bulnes was tempted to try to ride one—but as examination showed them to have their master-switches locked he gave up the idea. Presently he came to an intersection or fork. The small metal directional signs set in the wall bore legends in code: "A-64" and the like. Bulnes nevertheless looked at them carefully so as not to lose his way on his return.

AS HE walked he became aware of a faint distant hum. The tunnel did a dog-leg, and before he knew it he was upon another trapdoor exit like that through which he had entered. At the base of the steps sat another Kerberos: a brown-skinned fellow with straight black hair.

Bulnes started a little at the sight of the man, who sat at his panel reading a magazine. The man looked up; their eyes met.

Bulnes cursed himself for hesitating. He should have breezed on by, perhaps dropping a curt greeting without breaking stride. He thought fast, then said in his most American English: "Say, Mac, I'm a little turned around. Which way is the Sector-Super's office?"

The man addressed spoke with a Hindustani accent: "Farst right, second left. It is just bepore you come to the entrance to the condeetioner substation."

"Thanks, bud," said Bulnes, and strode off.

Soon he came to another intersection. As he stepped out into it he had to jump back to avoid being run down by another man on a motor scooter. The man wore the sandals, felt hat, and chlamys or riding-cloak of an Athenian ephebos. The cloak streamed out behind him leaving his body otherwise naked, which gave an odd effect.

Remembering his instructions Bulnes took the right-hand tunnel. The mechanical hum grew louder. More men passed him, some in the dress of Periklean Greece, others in modern working-clothes. Bulnes turned left at the next intersection. More men, more scooters, more noise, more cryptic signs. Doors began to appear in the walls of the tunnel. Bulnes noted the legends on them: "9-E-401", "Fai. Dip.", and

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at last one which read:

SEKTER SYUUP.

Bulnes toyed with the idea of walking in and handing his papyrus to the receptionist or secretary or the superintendent himself, but immediately vetoed the notion. After a slight pause he hurried on. More noise, more people, and then an open door with a chain across it, through which most of the noise seemed to come.

The sound was a mechanical clicking and buzzing such as one hears in a large telephone exchange, and the sight glimpsed through the opening was, in fact, much like such a place. There were endless banks of gadgets, each bank reaching to the high ceiling. Relays clicked, lights flashed, and in the electro-mechanical jungle a few technicians moved casually, pressing a button or throwing a switch or simply staring at the panels of little flashing lights.

Bulnes, not wishing to attract attention by interest in a sight that must be old hat to those who worked here, walked on past the open door, past another like it, and then turned and retraced his steps, taking a good long look through each opening.

A PICTURE began to form in his mind. The scientists of Emperor Vasil's staff must have developed a machine that conditioned people (hence the name "conditioner") to believe any predetermined story about who they were and when and where they had lived all their lives. Then the Emp had restored Greece to its Periklean condition (having first dismantled and stored all the genuine relics of antiquity in that country) and likewise converted some millions of Greeks into believing they were truly Sokrates, Perikles, et cetera.

Vasil would have indoctrinated these unwitting actors (by some sort of super-post-hypnotic suggestion?) to correspond with all the known historical characters of the time in question: the 530's before Christ. He would moreover have indoctrinated enough others to give a lifelike human environment—the right proportions of slaves and free men, workers and aristocrats, and so forth—for the reënactment of the drama of the Greek Golden Age. And no doubt the machine of which he had glimpsed one substation kept control of these people so that they should continue to act as they would have in the real Hellas.

The tunnel system, which might well extend all over Greece, served to maintain contact between the actors on the surface above and the unseen puppet-masters below, who could emerge by one of the secret entrances when expedient, pass among the pseudo-Athenians as one of them, gather data, and return to the tunnels.

That was no doubt the reason for the theft of the manuscript of Euripides: it was a datum. Why? Oh, they might want to compare the *Medeia* composed by pseudo-Euripides with the real one written by the real Euripides, to see if the machine was keeping the pseudo-Eurip on his rails. . . .

But was the machine supposed to force reënactment of the entire history of the period? Or was Vasil simply winding the play up, as it were, and letting it go from there as the human puppets chose to play it?

Was Periklean history going in fact according to schedule? Although Flin said the Peloponnesian War should be about to break out, all the talk in this pseudo-Athens was of the new treaty that Perikles had engineered with Sparta and the consequent prospect of peace.

Bulnes decided that he did not know enough Greek history to judge the matter. While a cultivated and well-informed man, he was after all a magazine editor specializing in current events, and his knowledge of ancient history was confined to scraps remembered from school twenty-odd years before the bits picked up from Flin.

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There were of course other possibilities. Perhaps Vasil IX had at his command some gadget by which he could actually snatch Periklean Hellas out of its proper space-time frame and bring it forward to this modern era, as Flin had suggested . . . no, that wouldn't work. Bulnes was sure that Euripides's wife Melitë was really Flin's wife Thalia, and the chances were atomically small that Thalia would have had a perfect double—an identical twin—who lived three thousand years before her. Besides, the logical mind of Knut Bulnes rebelled at the thought of such fanciful comings and goings in time.

Or could it be that the Emp had a gadget that, while it would not disturb the real space-time fabric, would enable Vasil or his men to view what actually happened at some past time—a sort of temporal television? In this way it would be possible, by a vast enough amount of detail work, to follow the career of every real Greek of the Periklean Age from birth to death. With this enormous mass of data one could, at least in theory, set up a pseudo-Hellas wherein every individual of the real one was approximately by some bemused modern Greek acting out his part.

And most obscure at all: Why should Vasil undertake such an extraordinary enterprise?

It must be fabulously expensive, and moreover the Emp would be treasuring up trouble for himself by trampling on the rights of so many people—using them as guinea-pigs without their consent—in case the near-dictatorship of the Lenz ministry should fall some day. Could it be that Vasil was merely employing the reënactment as an esthetic experience? Bulnes remembered the stories that Vasil, a devotee of small and esoteric cults, believed himself a reincarnation of several great historical leaders: Perikles of Athens, Henri Quatre of France, Franklin Roosevelt of the United States. . . .

If this worked, would he next undertake the reënactment of the history of France in the sixteenth century, or of the United States in the twentieth, just to see his eminent predecessors perform? The mind reeled at the thought.

BULNES reminded himself that the more urgent problem for him right now was to escape to the upper world again before his imposture was penetrated.

He walked briskly back the way he had come. When he arrived at the place where he had entered the tunnel-system he found a group of three people. One sat at the control-panel—not the blond man with the German accent, but a dish-faced Slavic type—while two others, one in work-clothes and one with a peaked cap and pistol-holster that suggested a security-organization, talked to him.

All three looked around as Bulnes came towards them, and he of the pistol said, "Hey, *you* seen Müller?"

"No," said Bulnes. "What's become of him?"

"That's what we're trying to find out. Surkov here came to relieve him and he wasn't there. If he's wandered off to get a brew, it'll be the last of his job."

The other standing man said: "I don't think Manfred would do that. Sure he likes a beer, but he's pretty conscientious about regs."

Bulnes felt his scalp prickle with the knowledge that Manfred Müller lay bound only a few meters away. If these employees of the System didn't locate him soon, he would probably get his gag loose and yell. Or even if he couldn't, one can still grunt or goan with a gag in one's mouth. Bulnes asked the seated man: "Didn't he at least leave a note for you?"

"Not one liddle think," said Surkov. "Nothing but dis empty sit."

At that instant another man appeared in the tunnel, a stout character wrapped in a himation. As he walked up, Surkov said: "Hallo, Pierre."

"Hallo yourself," said Pierre, unpin-

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ning his badge and laying it on the shelf below the control-panel. "What is all this? A conditioned man get into the tunnels?"

"Müller has disappeared himself," said Surkov, handing Pierre the clipboard from the shelf.

Pierre signed the sheet, took a good look at himself in the full-length mirror on the opposite wall, rearranged his himation, and started to climb the stairs. Surkov reached for the control-buttons.

"Hey, come back here!" said the guard. "Surkov, you never more than glanced at the picture on the badge. That man could be anybody at all."

"No, he could not," said Surkov. "I know him; I play bezique with him. See?" He waved the badge under the guard's nose and pushed one of the buttons. With a whirr of machinery the trapdoor began to open.

Bulnes had meant to deposit his badge and boldly walk out likewise, trusting to the human weakness that causes every security routine to become slipshod with familiarity. Now, however, that the guard was there, and that They knew that something had befallen Surkov's predecessor, somebody would be sure to take a sharp look at the thief's badge adorning Bulnes's chiton, and realize that the face depicted there did not look at all like that of the man who wore it.

"Be seeing you," said Bulnes, and strolled up the slope of the main tunnel with ostentatious casualness.

XIV

NOT until he had gone a good hundred meters did he dare look back. By then the curvature of the tunnel hid the trio around the portal. The upward slope became more and more pronounced. The damned thing must surely have risen above ground-level by now.

At last the passage ended in a stair with a niche beside it where a man sat at a control-board, very much like the portal through which Bulnes had entered the system. Bulnes walked boldly towards the man, unpinning his badge as he came. He laid the badge on the shelf and had his hand out for the pencil to sign the register even before the man had picked it up. He signed "Djon Hwait," laid down the pencil, and started up the stairs without a word, as if fully confident that the gatekeeper would press the button that opened the trap in time to keep him from bumping his head.

The gatekeeper reached for the control-buttons; then hesitated. "Hey!" he said.

Bulnes paused to look back into the man's staring eyes. "Well?"

"You forgot your key!"

"Oh. Sorry." Although Bulnes did not know what the key was for, he came back down a few steps with his hand out.

The man handed him a big bronze object with a long curved prong, more like a kind of sickle than a key.

Bulnes said: "Thanks!" and started back up the steps. The trap opened. Bulnes paused long enough for it to reach nearly full gape, then went up, thrusting his head into the darkness.

At that intant an alarm-bell rang loudly through the tunnel. "Hey!" said the gatekeeper again.

This time Bulnes kept on going.

"Come back!" said the gatekeeper, reaching for a button. With a slight change in the quality of its whirr the trapdoor began to close again. A glance showed Bulnes that the gatekeeper was fumbling in an open drawer, no doubt for a gun.

Bulnes hurled the bronze key in his hand at the head of the gatekeeper. He was rewarded by seeing the heavy object bounce off the man's balding cranium with a satisfactory *bonk!* As the key clattered to the floor and the man started to fall after it, Bulnes turned, skipped up the remaining three steps, and hurled himself away from the open-

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ing. The trapdoor brushed his heels as he leaped out and closed with a thump and a click behind him.

BLINDED by sudden darkness, Bulnes cracked his shin on some unseen object. Cursing roundabout Spanish obscenities under his breath he began feeling his way. He was in a large room cluttered with all sorts of furniture and piles of objects, some of metal and some of cloth. Any minute he expected the trapdoor to reopen and spill out men and guns.

As he steered his course among the obstacles, he at last found a wall and began feeling his way along it. He covered one wall, bumped his head against an unseen bronze statue, made a right-angle, and continued some meters along the next wall before he came to a door. And what a door! A huge bronze affair, as wide as he could span with his arms, and moreover one of a pair.

The door was closed (as he found by fumbling) by a large bolt on the inside. He pushed the bolt, and then the door itself, and the huge doors swung silently open.

Bulnes found himself facing a row of small Doric columns interconnected by a metal railing, and beyond that a larger row. Ahead, slightly to the right, the massive form of Athenë Promachos towered against the stars, topped by the triple-crested helmet of the goddess. He now knew where he was: on the porch at the West or rear of the Parthenon. The room in which he had emerged from the tunnel system was the storage-room occupying the rear third of the building.

Bulnes turned, pushed the great doors closed again, and hurried to the bronze rail and climbed over. He trotted down the steps at the end of the Parthenon and sprinted for the Propylaia, dodging art-works by starlight. He had almost reached his goal when from the forest of columns in front of him a deep voice with a Scythian accent spoke: "Who there?"

Damn the Scythians! Bulnes ducked behind a statue and paused, watching and listening. Boots stamped on the marble in front of him, and as his eyes acquired night-sharpness he thought that he could see the pointed tip of a Scythian cap moving about the Propylaia.

He turned and headed back the way he had come, crouching. Any minute now the back doors of the Parthenon might fly open to disgorge more enemies.

Right in front of him Bulnes recognized a statue to which Flin had called his attention when he had shown him the place. It was Myron's bronze Athenë, a slender girlish goddess more to Bulnes's taste than the beefy colossal Promachos by Pheidias. This was the statue over which Flin had enthused so when he had come upon the workmen, under the direction of the sculptor, setting it in place. As Bulnes remembered his colleague's chatter, his statue was to be one of a pair. The other statue, not yet mounted, was to be that of the satyr Marsyas, capering at the sight of the flutes that Athenë had just thrown down because she thought that blowing them made her look ridiculous.

Marsyas's base was there even if the satyr himself was not. With the Scythian archer coming up behind him and the puppet-masters in the Parthenon in front, Bulnes adopted a desperate expedient that, he hoped, would succeed by sheer audacity. He shucked his chiton, wrapped it around the papyrus, and threw the bundle away. Then he mounted the pedestal of the statue of Marsyas, naked, and struck what he sincerely hoped was a statuesque pose.

THE doors of the Parthenon opened and a small group of men came out. By rolling his eyes Bulnes saw that they were dressed in chitons. They began to spread out purposefully. One of them passed not far from Bulnes, but behind him, and it took all the willpower Bulnes could summon not to turn

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his head.

The voice of the Scythian archer came again from the direction of the Propylaia. Somebody blew a whistle, and the men in the chitons ran back to the Parthenon. In a matter of seconds they were all inside, and the doors closed again.

This time the Scythian came on with determination, now and then calling out: "Who there? Who you? I see you! Come out, you thief!"

Bulnes stood very still as the fellow clumped past, not ten meters away. The policeman continued on his way to the west end of the Parthenon. He sniffed around the porch, like a willing but none too intelligent watchdog, and then walked back towards the Propylaia. Bulnes cursed silently. He had hoped the fellow would at least make a circuit of the Parthenon, so that while he was out of sight at the east end Bulnes could make a break for the Propylaia.

Bulnes waited a few minutes longer. Heat-lightning flickered on the horizon.

When the Scythian failed to reappear and the rear doors of the Parthenon stayed shut, Bulnes slipped down from his pedestal, donned his chemise, rolled up his papyrus, and set out for the north side of the Akropolis. Flin had said something about stairways down the mountainside at this point.

Behind him stood the colossus of Athenë Promachos; on his right a temple under construction; in front of him a tangle of walls and hedges marking off various sacred precincts, and beyond that the massive wall that went all the way round the Akropolis. Bulnes boldly pushed through the nearest hedge and began searching for a way down from the height. Finding none in this enclosure—only more shrines and statues—he climbed a wall and went on to the next.

It took him an hour of solid, sweat-soaked searching to find the stairway he sought, and then it was hidden behind a screen of bushes and architectural froufrou so that none would have suspected its presence. The stair led down, not on the outside, but into a cleft where the whole north side of the Akropolis had come adrift from the main body of the rock. The stair sloped down through the crack between this colossal slab and the solid part of the crag.

Bulnes had to feel his way step by step through nearly total darkness. He should, he thought, be approaching those caves on the north side of the Akropolis that Flin had pointed out. He had to move, however, at such a snail-like pace that it took him nearly half an hour to cover a distance of not much over a hundred meters.

The stair at last leveled out until he was shuffling along a path at the base of the cleft. After many minutes more of feeling his way he began to get a glimmer of light from ahead: yellow lamplight, if he was any judge. There came a murmur of voices.

Now and then the cleft came together so that he had to squeeze through the gap. The voices grew louder, and Bulnes found himself standing at the back of a cave—no doubt one of those that he had seen from below. It was actually a double cave, two caverns having a common mouth. The light and sound were coming from the other, mostly out of sight around the rocky bulkhead that divided them.

There was a stir of motion at the cave entrance, and a man in a long chiton down to his ankles came around the bulkhead toward Bulnes. Bulnes shrank back into his tunnel, sure that the man must see him, and then thankfully remembering that the man would have just stepped out of the lamplight and so would not have his eyes adjusted to the dark.

THE man came, not at Bulnes, but toward his left. Arriving at the cave-wall, back where the rocks narrowed, the man pulled aside a curtain and squeezed into a hole in the rock. The curtain fell back into place, incon-

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spicuous among the other offerings and objects ranged around the wall of the cave.

When the man did not reappear, Bulnes stole forward toward the cave-entrance to where he could see the proceedings. The other cave contained an altar before which stood a priest. Something burned on the altar. On a ledge that ran along the cliff, level with the cave-floor stood a row of men: evidently the suppliants or worshippers.

The priest had his arms up in a gesture of blessing, intoning a prayer of which Bulnes could not catch half the words. When he had finished he said: "You may ask, O man!"

The first man in line stretched his arms out, palms up, and called loudly: *"Otototoi, Theoi, Ge! Apollon! Apollon!"*

When he had repeated the exclamation three times, a hollow inhuman voice resounded from the back of the cave: "I am here, O man. Speak!"

Bulnes nearly jumped out of his skin when the voice first sounded, though a second's reflection showed him what the true cause of it must be. The suppliant continued: "O Averter of Evil, tell me what I should do to make my wife conceive?"

"Let her eat three mustard-seeds while facing east on the night of the next full moon, at moonrise, and do thou pay ten drachmai to the priest of this shrine of Apollo. Next!"

The next man wanted to know if the trading-voyage in which he had invested eight mnai would be successful, and so on. Bulnes grinned, realizing whither the other priest had been bound when he disappeared into the hole in the back of the cave.

This method of milking the Athenian public also gave Bulnes the germ of an idea. More than one man could play Apollo.

He waited until the last inquirer had received his reply and departed; then until the two priests had tidied up their caves, counted their money, put out their lamps, and departed likewise. Then he came out of hiding and prowled along the ledge until he came by degrees to the north wing of the Propylaia, stole down the steps, and thence homeward. Poor Wiyem would have to go supperless, because it would be impossible to buy food this late at night. Anyway Bulnes's utter exhaustion would have overcome his normally kindly solicitude for his companion.

He staggered into the inn of Podokles, pacified the growling watchdog, and fell asleep almost before his head struck his pallet.

XV

THE SUN was high when the flies and the noise of Athens at work finally awoke Knut Bulnes from his sleep of exhaustion. He opened an eye. Then, at the realization that he was late for his lecture, he leaped to his feet, feeling light-headed from lack of food. He would not even have time to feed poor Wiyem Flin.

One thing about the Athenian way of life: there was no tedious routine of washing and shaving and hunting for a clean pair of socks in the morning. He already had on his chiton, and looked around for his himation. Then he remembered discarding it in the Theseion last night when invading the tunnels.

Bulnes had picked up enough Athenian cultural attiudes to know that he could not pass for a philosopher without a cloak, and would therefore have to procure one even if he went without breakfast. He got the address of a weaver from Podokles (there was no such thing as a tailor in Athens) and half an hour later was hurrying toward the house of Kallaischros with another two-by-four-meter rectangle of cloth swathing his lanky figure.

Kritias said: "Where have you been? We have waited half the morning. What sort of teacher are you?"

Bulnes made his apologies, adding the lie that he had had to feed his poor

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friend Philon, rotting away in the Oikema.

"Speaking of which, my dear sirs," he continued, "I believe it was agreed yesterday that the noble Kritias should put up the money to bail out my colleague?"

Kritias looked blank. "I remember nothing of the sort. True, you mentioned some such matter at the Kynosarges, but we explained that neither of us was in a position to help you. Is that not so, Demokritos?"

"It is not!" said Demokritos. "Indeed, Kritias, you definitely promised Bouleus the money. No, do not wink at me. As this man has dealt justly with me, I intend to see him dealt justly with by others."

Kritias, grumbling, went out and presently came back with a bag that clinked. "Hold out your hands," he said, and began counting out silver coins, most of them massy dekadrachma as big around as an Imperial silver kraun and a good deal heavier.

"Four hundred seventy, four hundred eighty, four hundred eighty-four, four hundred eighty-eight, four hundred eighty-nine, four hundred ninety, five hundred drachmai," he said. "By the Dog, have you not brought a bag?"

Bulnes stood with fingers spread, a great pile of coins filling his cupped hands and a lot more scattered on the ground at his feet. He had not before thought of the disadvantages of the lack of paper money and checks for large sums.

"I shall manage," he said. He laid the money down and did as he had seen Athenians do: pulled his belt tighter and stowed the silver inside the breast of his chiton, the belt retaining it from falling through. The total mass weighed nearly five pounds and was cold against his midriff.

THREE hours later Bulnes and the Polemarchos came to the Oikema and found the jailer. The Polemarchos said: "Release the prisoner Philon; this man has gone bail for him."

The jailer led them around to the side of the building where Flin was confined. The prisoner glared silently at them as the jailer unlocked the fetter on his leg, then stood up, flicked an insect from his clothes, and followed them out of the cell.

The Polemarchos said: "I was going to schedule your trial for the seventeenth, but since your friend here says Euripides has promised to withdraw his complaint, I will put it off to the twenty-fifth. By then we should have heard of him."

"Thank you, dear sir," said Bulnes, and turned to Flin. "I suppose you're hungry enough to—"

"Hungry!" howled Flin. "You bloody kosker, have you been trying to starve me to death? Here I've missed three meals, and the bugs ate me alive, and not a word from you! I see you've got a new himation; been having a gay time chasing the women, I suppose? Can't trust you."

"Shut up," said Bulnes.

"What? What's that?"

"I said shut up! *Calle su!* Must I make it plainer?" Bulnes cocked a fist.

Flin subsided, muttering. As they walked through the market-place Bulnes told of his adventures since he had seen Flin last. When he came to the place where Thalia, alias Melitë, admitted him to the house of Euripides, Flin burst out: "How did she look? What did she say? Did she show any signs of knowing me?"

Bulnes went on with his story, censoring the part where the woman had made an obvious pass at him. Flin said: "When can I see her again?"

"You can't, my dear comrade."

"What d'you mean, I can't? We can use that manuscript as an excuse for calling on Euripides, can't we?"

"I mean several things. For one, you've already got yourself in bad with them by your outburst at the play. For another, it was just luck that I happened to see her. These Athenians normally

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keep their women shut up like a lot of medieval hidalgos. And for another, it's a fifteen-kilometer hike down to Peiraieus and back."

"But—but—dash it all—"

"Take it easy. It would only upset you without accomplishing anything, as she wouldn't know you. We'd best leave the Euripideses alone while we figure out our next move."

Bulness went on to tell of his nocturnal experiences in the tunnels and on the Akropolis.

". . . so I went home," he concluded, "and I should have got up earlier this morning except—what's the matter, my dear Bil?"

Flin's mouth was puckered up and tears ran down his plump cheeks. "I—I can't help it. You've destroyed my last hope that this could be the real thing," he blubbered, wiping his face with his cloak. "Now I know it's a stage-show. Never mind me; I'm just a useless old pedant. Sorry I flared up just now, old thing."

BULNES was reminded of a puppy that, surprised in some misdemeanor, lies on its back and waves all four paws in an effort to propitiate its gods. You couldn't very well kick the beast, no matter how angry you were. He said: "The silver plate in Diksen's head must be the reason the broadcast wave doesn't affect him."

Flin had recovered his composure. "I see. What's this idea of yours?"

"If we could get a message to Perikles, telling him to appear at the Cave of Apollo, we might get into that priest-hole back of the case and interview him. If he were tipped off to the nature of this act that's going on, he might do something about it."

"Would he believe you?" asked Flin.

"That's why we should pose as Apollo."

"Mm. The real Perikles was a skeptical sort of blighter. And what'd you mean by 'we'? You don't think I'll risk *my* neck on any such stunt, do you?"

"Yes, I do. If we can convince him that he and all the other pseudo-Greeks are being used as puppets in a game, maybe he'll dig into the tunnels and break up the show."

"That part's all right, but why must I be in on it? You're a venturesome sort of chap, but I'm no ruddy good at playing Red Indian, you know."

"The language, my dear fellow," said Bulnes with elaborate patience. "How impressed d'you think he'd be by an Apollo who talked broken Greek with a Spanish-English accent?"

"Well I'm not going," said Flin, tightening his lips.

"Why not?"

"If you must know, I'm terrified."

"*No es verdad?*" said Bulnes, with an ominous tilt to his eyebrows. "I think you will. Unless you prefer to go back to the Oikema, while I return the bail-money to Kritias . . ."

"*Oy!* You wouldn't!"

"Wouldn't I? Try me and see."

"Oh, damn and blast!" Flin stamped his foot. "Why do you always get the better of me? A dashed tyrant, that's what you are."

"Thank you, dear comrade. Let's finish up here; you'll have to write that letter for me."

"When were you thinking of staging this interview?" inquired Flin.

"Tonight if possible. I don't wish to give Perikles time to devise a trap for us."

Two hours later, much improved by a meal, Bulnes and Flin got to work upon their letter. Using the manuscript of Euripides as a guide to penmanship, Flin wrote:

Phoibos Apollon to Perikles Xanthippou of Cholargos, Strategos Dekatos Autos of the City of Athenai:

If you will present yourself alone at the Cave of Apollo tonight, the tenth of Elaphebolion, two hours after sunset, having taken measures to insure that our conversa-

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tions shall not be interrupted, you shall hear matters of grave import to yourself and to the state.

Flin said: "I can't guarantee that'll fetch him. It looks too much like an attempt to get him alone for abduction or murder."

"Oh, he'll have friends or slaves within call. Now let's get Diksen and case the joint, as they say in America."

Diksen, once awakened, was full of enthusiasm for the scheme. He walked them along the base of the Akropolis, below the statues of the Tribal Heroes, and pointed out significant features:

"That split in the rock runs back to another cave—see that dark spot?—they call the Aglaurion after some dame in their cockeyed religion. There's two stairs going up from the bottom of the split to the top, one in the Aglaurion end and one in the middle. And see that path going up to the wall? Where the old guy is sitting with the goats?" He pointed ahead to the eastern part of the north side of the hill. "Well, there's a hole in the angle of the wall and another stair going up to the top. These stairs ain't really secret—I went through 'em all when my beat was up there—but the priests try to keep the common people out."

The next task was the delivery of the letter. They hiked over to the house of Perikles, and Bulnes made friends with a little girl playing naked in the filth of the street and bribed her with a copper to deliver it. He and Flin watched from around the nearest corner until they saw the letter handed to the porter.

THEY ate early and went up to the Akropolis before sunset, when the main crowds were beginning to come down. They turned left as they issued from the Propylaia and walked to the inclosures along the north side. To Bulnes the area looked quite different by daylight, so that it took him some time to identify the route he had followed the night before.

When he finally found it they waited until nobody seemed to be looking and then hid among the shrubbery. It proved easy—too easy, Bulnes feared. After the sun had set, a couple of Scythians went by shooing the remaining visitors off the Akropolis. However, they made no effort to beat the bushes for lurkers.

The evening hush came over the area. A pair of priests went by, talking in low tones about money.

"Follow me," said Bulnes, and led the way crouching to the head of the stair down into the cleft.

Although the sky overhead was still light, the cleft was so dark that Bulnes had to feel his way as on the previous night. At the bottom of the stair he led Flin along the rough mass of stones and earth that filled the bottom of the cleft, until they reached the Cave of Pan.

"Here we wait," said Bulnes.

As the light dimmed, footsteps sounded in the adjacent Cave of Appollo, and the voice of a priest: "No, my son, the god will not present himself tonight. Come back tomorrow with your questions." Then, as the footsteps of the inquirer receded along the ledge, the same voice spoke again: "It is plain robbery and oppression that Perikles should ask exclusive use of the shrine tonight. Why can he not take his turn like any other citizen? That is your so-called democracy!"

"Will the god give him a message?" said another sacerdotal voice.

"After he has cost us two or three mnai in fees? Not this embodiment of the god!"

"We might give him something short and ambiguous, as they do at Delphi. You remember when Kroisos the Lydian king asked whether he should—"

"*Ea!* Since he has had so little consideration for us, he can stand there all night without answer for all of me. 'Message of importance to the state,' forsooth!"

The conversation wandered off into the subject of the love-lives of the two priests, and while Bulnes thought it

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might have been of interest to students of abnormal psychology it had no bearing on his present mission. The conversation was punctuated by a sharp tapping which Bulnes identified as the impact of a flint against a piece of steel or pyrites, and presently there was the faint crackling of the altar fire and the smell of incense.

At last there came more footsteps along the ledge, and the priests' voices, oily with cordiality: "Rejoice, my dear Perikles!"

"Rejoice," said a new voice.

"This is an honor; it has been years since you visited our shrine. The Ruler of the Seasons will be pleased."

"I daresay. But since the Bright One specifically asked me to present myself alone, would you gentlemen mind . . ."

BULNES was sure he had heard that voice before. It was a staccato voice, speaking in short phrases and biting off the ends of its sentences with a snap. Bulnes remarked:

"That jerky voice doesn't sound to me like a great orator."

"That's Perikles all right," whispered Flin. "That's how the real one was."

"Come on," murmured Bulnes, and crept toward the secret entrance to the priest-hole. He thrust the curtain aside and slunk into the tunnel until he reached the opening behind the altar.

The head priest was saying: ". . . but my dear, dear Perikles, it would be against all precedent. The Health-Giver would be offended if we absented ourselves . . ."

There was a crackle of papyrus and the voice of Perikles: "There you are; see? I do not know what this means, but I intend to find out. Will you go, or must I call for help in removing you?"

"Oh, we go, we go. But do not say we failed to warn you."

"Not that way; this way. I do not care to be deceived by human voices issuing from holes in this rabbit-warren."

Bulnes looked through the funnel-shaped hole into the Cave of Apollo. Beyond the altar stood two priests, their backs more or less to Bulnes, and beyond them Perikles. All Bulness could see through the smoke of the altar-fire was a neatly-trimmed gray beard and a himation.

The priests went out and turned left along the ledge. Perikles came forward towards the altar and called sharply: "Phoibos Apollon, if it indeed be you, I have come as you requested. Have you a message for me?"

"Go ahead," whispered Bulnes, pushing Flin into the place behind the speaking-hole.

Flin said: "O Perikles, it is indeed the God of the Silver Bow. You and all your people have been subjected to a monstrous deception, and it is time this imposture were unmasked."

"How so, O god?"

"You are not Perikles Xanthippou, nor are the other Hellenes the persons they think they are. The true Perikles lived three thousand years ago. You are a man who has been seized by the world-rulers, and by their science caused to believe that you are indeed this ancient Perikles, and the other Hellenes have been subjected to the same deception."

"Indeed?" Perikles took the news, Bulnes thought, with unwonted calm.

"Just so. If you wish proof you have but to order your people to dig down into the floor of the Parthenon chamber of the New Hekatompedon, and below the altar of Theseus in the Theseion, to discover the tunnels the servants of the world-rulers use for—"

Flin broke off and jerked back from the orifice. Bulnes took a quick look through the hole in time to see the man called Perikles coming around the altar and drawing a pistol from his draperies. In that second the altar-fire blazed up, and by its light Bulnes recognized, despite the full beard, the face he had manipulated scores of times in making up the dummy for the next issue of *Trends*—

The face of Vasil Hohnsol-Romano,

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ninth of the name, and Emperor of the Earth.

XVI

BULNES tumbled back in his turn. As he did so, the piercing crack of a shot smote his ears and fragments of rock stung his face. Again and again came the crack of the gun mingling with the crash of explosive bullets, and each time the flash lit up the cloud of rock-dust that filled the priest-hole as the explosions pulverized the rock in and around the orifice. A hit from one of those little pellets would blow a man to pieces.

He began crawling after Flin towards the curtained entrance. *"Caray!"* he muttered. "What the hell?"

"He's coming around this way!" quavered Flin. "Say—look there!"

Bulnes craned his neck backwards. The shooting had stopped and the heavier dust-particles were settling. By the fugitive light of the altar-fire, through the now enlarged orifice, Bulnes observed that the explosions had broken away a concealed door at the rear of the priest-hole. The camouflage had consisted of a plaster coating modeled and painted to look like the surrounding rock, and now its pallid fractures and chicken-wire reinforcing were plainly visible.

Bulnes heard footsteps in the Cave of Pan from which they had come. Wherever it led, the newly revealed door seemed to offer more safety than a cave containing an armed and homicidally inclined emperor. Bulnes scurried back into the hole. The explosions had smashed the bracing that held the lock, so that a good heave opened the door. Bulnes scooted through, Flin after him.

"Close it!" hissed Bulnes.

As the door closed they were again plunged into darkness. Not complete, however. As his pupils dilated, Bulnes became aware of a row of tiny spots of softly glowing light along the roof of the tunnel in which they found themselves. These were ordinary radioactive night-lights of the sort sold by that American firm, Western House Electric or whatever it was. Gradually his vision sharpened until he could dimly see the floor and walls as well.

He proceeded, crouching so as not to hit his head on the roof, until the tunnel ended in a T-intersection. The new tunnel, at right angles to the old, was somewhat higher and carried a mass of cables along its roof.

Bulnes turned left at hazard and followed the lights of this tunnel for perhaps a couple of hundred meters. It dipped down and did a couple of dog-legs, and then ended with a door that reminded him of the pressure-doors through watertight bulkheads on large ships.

On the wall beside the door was a plate in which was mounted a push-button. Below the button was a legend illuminated by a brighter night-light. The legend instructed the wayfarer in English to push the button to summon a guard to open the door and admit him to the tunnel-system.

Bulnes said: "I don't think we'd better do that. Let's try the other direction."

They retraced their steps to the tunnel leading to the Cave of Apollo, but continued straight on instead of turning. Bulnes, puffing up the slope, said: "We know a couple of things now: not only that Perikles is really Vasil the Ninth, but that he's an unconditioned man like us and like Diksen."

"How d'you know that?"

"Would he be shooting a pistol otherwise? Of course he doesn't believe in Apollo, and as soon as he heard your voice he guessed that another unconditioned man was talking to him from hiding."

"What the deuce d'you suppose he's doing? Putting on this whole Greek thing as a sort of grandiose charade to satisfy his vanity?"

Bulnes shrugged in the gloom. "We'll find out sooner or later. You know he

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considers himself a reincarnation of Perikles; maybe he has some mystical idea of re-living his former life. It's evident he doesn't want us to give him away."

"Perhaps so, but the bustard needn't try to murder us on sight. I say, what's this?"

They had come to the end of the tunnel. There were no outlets except straight up. The cables overhead led up, and so did a ladder, into a dimly-lit cavernousness above.

BULNES craned his neck, peering up, then started to climb. He soon found himself squirming through a jungle of struts and cross-braces, lit by a whole constellation of night-lights. Around him rose an irregular structure of dark-greenish metal.

Flin said: "By Gad, Knut, I know where we are!"

"Where?"

"Inside Athenë Promachos!"

"Really? Let's hope we don't give the dear lady indigestion. Where do those cables go?"

Following the zigzag course of the ladder, Bulnes finally reached a point that he judged to be somewhere on a level with the solar plexus of the goddess. From there, looking up, he could see where the cables ended in a forest of metal antennae, something like radar antennae: clusters of rods and plates arranged in patterns.

"There they are," he said.

"There are what? Oh, those things." Flin fell silent. After puckering his mouth with thought for some seconds he said: "Of course I don't know a ruddy thing about electricity, Knut, but I thought radio and radar antennae had to be out in the open; that a lot of metal around them would smother the rays or whatever it is they send out."

"That's true on the electromagnetic spectrum, but not on the gravito-magnetic. You know, the stuff the World Government scientists were playing with a couple of decades ago?"

"No."

"Well, they were gravito-magnetics. I'm not a scientist myself, but *Trends* has a tickler-file on the subject, and once every few years we try to find something out about it. There was a lot of activity, as I said, with prophecies of the wonderful things it would do for us, and then it dropped out of sight. As far as *Trends* knows, not a single scientist is interested in it any more."

"So you think they've been developing this secretly?"

"It looks that way."

"Why?" asked Flin.

"I'm just guessing, but I suspect it's what keeps all our pseudo-Greeks under control."

Flin looked speculatively at the cables. "If we could cut through those, we'd queer the whole pitch at once."

Bulnes shook his head. "Probably electrocute ourselves in the process, and they're armored so it would take days even with a modern hack-saw. It would be more to the point to find the master switch that turns off the power. Let's see: there ought to be a door in the lady's skirts at street-level . . . here we are. Get ready to slip out quietly . . ."

Presently the shadowy figures of Bulnes and Flin emerged from the colossus and hurried toward the northeast corner of the Akropolis, in seach of the stairway that led to the base of the wall and the path down the hillside that Diksen had shown them that afternoon.

XVII

A SOUND awakened Knut Bulnes. As he opened his eyes the first thing he saw was a pair of Scythian trousers, surmounted by a Scythian jacket and, above that, the broad face of Roi Diksen. The American had evidently just stepped into the dormitory of the inn of Podokles. When he saw that Bulnes was awake he said: "Hey, Mr. Bulnes, how'd it go off, huh? I was scared—"

"Shut up, O barbarian!" growled one of Podokles's other guests. "I sleep."

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"We'd better go out," said Bulnes, and shook Flin awake.

They wrapped their himations about them and issued into the street. The sky was pale in the East, though the sun had not yet risen. Bulnes shivered a little in the pre-dawn cold.

Diksen said: "Now what the hell happened? I'm patrolling my beat in the Kerameikos, see, and I hear a racket from the Akropolis, and this morning the boys on the force is talking about how the big-shot went to the Cave of Apollo and the god shot off a couple of thunderbolts to show he was the real McCoy. On account of I know better, I was expecting maybe as how you guys had gotten plugged."

Bulnes told their story.

"The Emp!" exclaimed Diksen, his wide-open features taking on a comical look of craft. "You know what? He's up to something!"

"Your gift for understatement," said Bulnes, "is magnificent."

"Oh, but that ain't all! Perikles passed out an order to begin arms-inspection for the militia, a tribe at a time. So the whole Erechtheis tribe is gonna parade outside the Dipylon Gate this A. M., two hours after sunrise. Then tomorrow it's the turn of Aigeis."

"Can we watch?" asked Bulnes.

"I dunno why not. Looky, let me catch a litle sleep and I'll meet you out there two hours from now."

"But your lecture-appointment!" said Flin to Bulnes.

"You, my dear friend, will take care of that."

"But really, you know, I ought not to take it on impromptu—"

"*Carajo!* You helped me prepare the lecture, and you can have the fun of trying to remember the subjunctive aorist of 'to be' for a change."

"Oh, very well," grumbled Flin. . . .

At the appointed time Bulnes headed for the Dipylon Gate. As he slopped through the dirt he became aware of great numbers of Athenians making in the same direction, armed for battle. Every one of them carried a round shield with a big A painted upon it, and a light six-foot pike, and wore a crested helmet. Most also wore a bronze cuirass (sometimes studded leather), a kilt of studded leather straps, and bronze greaves. As the throng funnelled toward the gate, remarks flew: "*Oi!* Stop pushing!" "Hurry up, Andokides, or I will kick your fanny." "What is the meaning of. . . ." "Where have you been, O Strymon?" ". . . I am sure he stole it from the people, but you know juries . . ." "Maybe there will be war after all . . ." ". . . I told him, if you think you can cheat Hegias and get away with . . ."

Bulnes brooded a bit on the predicament of himself and Flin and Diksen. His intentions were still to destroy this pseudo-Periklean regime—in order, not only to enable himself and the others to escape, but also to end the strange mental bondage in which Vasil's gravito-magnetic conditioner held the Greeks.

But then the unsettling thought occurred to Bulnes that perhaps Perikles had indeed discovered a golden-age formula, and that by disrupting the experiment, he, Bulnes, was depriving mankind of universal happiness. But his tough, proud, individualistic spirit asserted itself. Happiness purchased at the price of suppressing one's own memories and personality, in order to assume the largely suppositious ones of some historical character, was not worth the cost.

OUTSIDE the Dipylon Gate men were falling into ranks. Scythians were directing spectators to one end of the formation, and Bulnes let himself be shooed along with the rest. From there he could look down the front rank—a somewhat serpentine and irregular one, but brave in bronze and iron. In front of the militiamen stood a small clump of men among whom Bulnes could make out the handsomely bearded figure of Perikles-Vasil with a Corinthian helmet pushed back on his head so that his face showed.

It took the hoplites an interminable

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time to get squared away, for this force seemed weak in officer organization and every soldier argued all the time at the top of his lungs. Finally they shook down into hundred-man companies, and Perikles called:

"Attention! Men of the tribe of Erechtheis stand upright. We will pass among you to see that all weapons and defenses are in good condition."

He began moving slowly towards where Bulnes stood. Bulnes experienced a moment of panic before he remembered that, happily, Perikles had not gotten a good look at his face the night before. Perikles, followed by the other men of his group, arrived at the hither end of the front rank of the hoplitai. He stood there for a long time, looking down the line and sometimes exchanging a word with the other officials: "Behold those potbellies! We shall have to institute some special exercise to reduce them . . ."

His manner was that of one who has all the time in the world; or, Bulnes thought, one who was deliberately killing time.

"Let us go, Perikles," said one of the officials at last. "We cannot keep them standing in the sun all morning."

Slowly, perhaps reluctantly, Perikles moved down the line, stopping for a long close look at each militiaman. Bulnes heard him say to the second man in the line:

"That cracked old shield will never save you from the spears of the enemy. See that you have a new one at the next muster . . ."

"Hey, Mr. Bulnes!" came a stage-whisper from behind, and there stood Diksen. "Sorry, but I guess I kinda overslept. How's it going?"

"At this rate," said Bulnes, "the inspection will take all day."

They watched as the figures of Perikles and his colleagues dwindled with distance and their voices became inaudible.

Then, suddenly, it happened.

Every soldier gave a jerk, a start, or a shudder. Spears toppled right and left as their holders let go of them to turn and stare in amazement at those around them. There was a clatter of dropped shields; men felt their beards and patted their cuirasses. And from the armed mass came a rising murmur of sound. Bulnes, listening, caught sentences in Modern Greek, and some in other languages: "Where am I?"

"What's this damn thing on my head? A cuspidor?"

"I don't get it! I'm punching the cash-register in my restaurant, and next minute I'm out here with a manhole cover on my arm . . ."

A few, taken by panic, ran off across the plain; the rest babbled questions, louder and louder until the din became deafening. Perikles stepped back from the line and shouted: "All those who understand me, step this way!"

THE confusion, however, became more chaotic with each second. A number of men did step towards Perikles, but not, apparently, because they understood his Attic. Instead, they menaced him with their spears and yelled demands for an explanation.

Now the crowd around Bulnes reacted, too. There were murmurs of: "Madness!" "Witchcraft!" "The gods have smitten us!" "They speak in strange tongues!" "Flee for your lives!"

Then, when it looked as though anything might happen, the hoplitai started again, stared around wildly as they had done at the beginning, and began wandering back to their places in line and picking up their discarded equipment, asking each other: "What happened?" "What happened?"

"Get back in formation!" cried Perikles. "We will carry on the inspection."

And, his companions still following him, he walked back to where he had been at the moment of the outburst and continued down the line. Now, however, he walked rapidly, giving each man scarcely a glance. In a few minutes it was all over and the citizens, dismissed,

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were streaming back to the city, still asking questions of each other and of passersby.

"Well!" said Diksen. "What do you think of that?"

Bulnes frowned. "It looks to me as though those antennae inside Athenë Promachos must control each of these Greeks individually; each is on a different wave-length, as it were. I suppose his people underground have a card-file of all the Greeks, and he told them to check off all the male citizens of the tribe of Erechtheis, and then at a predetermined time to throw the switches that controlled them. He must have hoped to catch one or more unconditioned men by watching to see who *didn't* start capering and asking where he was."

"I get cha. Don't seem to me as how that'd work, though; too many people all yacking away at once."

"Right. Don't be surprised if you hear the inspections of the other tribes have been called off."

They picked up Flin at the house of Kallaischros and wended their way to the Agora to buy their lunch. Flin, eating an omlet wrapped in leaves, listened to the account of the morning's adventure.

"He's determined to uncover the unconditioned men at all costs," he commented. "We'd jolly well better do something. By the way, Kritias says a couple of his friends want to join our course."

"Splendid, my dear fellow," said Bulnes. "We shall be successful in spite of ourselves."

"There's one catch, though: The crowd's getting too large for the house of Kallaischros. We shall have to move out."

"The Agora's too noisy for my taste," said Bulnes, glancing over to where Sokrates, losing his himation with the violence of his gestures, was arguing: ". . . but my dear Antiphon, if everyone takes the view that morality is simply a matter of who can think up the cleverest arguments to support his interests, what becomes of public virtue? How long will such a state endure?"

Bulnes added: "How about one of the gymnasia?"

"It would have to be the Kynosarges," said Flin, "since the others don't admit non-citizens. But what shall we do about the Emp? I have no doubt they can locate us eventually. How about another attempt to warn Perikles of the accusation impending against his friends, Pheidias and the rest?"

BULNES said: "You forget, my dear Bil, we're not trying to prop up the Periklean regime; we're trying to tear it down."

"By Jove, you're right. But isn't it awful? To have to work for the destruction of a golden age, even a synthetic one like this?" Flin asked Diksen: "Any chance of fomenting an insurrection among your fellow-gendarmes?"

"Huh?"

"He means," said Bulnes, "could you stir up the rest of the Scythians to revolt?"

"Dunno. Doubt it. It's funny about slaves here in Athens. Where I come from everybody's as good as everybody else, and usually better, and if a character says to you 'Slave, do this or that,' you kick his teeth down his throat. But these gooks seem to expect it. Besides, the Scythian cops got a good deal. They can keep women on the side, and when they get too old for work the commissioners turn 'em loose." He yawned prodigiously. "'Scuse me, fellas, I gotta get back to barracks to catch some sleep. You forget I'm up all night."

He left. Flin said: "Hadn't we better see if Euripides has sent his letter to the Polemarchos yet?"

To his surprise, Bulnes learned that the letter in question had been delivered to the Polemarchos by a slave that very morning. "Kephisophon must have remembered to remind him," said Bulnes. "My dear sir, is my friend now a free man again?"

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"Yes," said the magistrate. "If you will wait, I will send a slave to the treasury to fetch your bail money. Have you two found a patron yet?"

"No," said Bulnes. "We approached the good Sokrates, but he—uh—could not see his way clear."

"That subversive agitator, always unsettling our young men by questioning the wisdom of our ancestors! It is just as well for you that he refused. However, be advised to find a patron soon, as you will be entered upon the tax-rolls in any case and you might as well have the legal standing of a registered *metoikos*."

The money came, and Bulnes and Flin departed to return it to Kritias.

* * *

Late that afternoon they were sitting in the inn of Podokles and working up the next few days' lectures when Dromon the slave came in.

"Sirs," he said, "a message from my master Sokrates: Perikles is giving a dinner and symposium tonight at his house, to which he has invited all the philosophers of Athens. He asked my master to round up any he, Perikles, might be unacquainted with, wherefore Sokrates sent me to seek you men of Tartessos."

Bulnes exchanged looks with Flin, asking: "What's this?"

Flin said: "That's out of character. The real Perikles wasn't a very sociable chap; seldom entertained and seldom appeared in public except on state business. D'you think he'll try to smoke us out the way he did the militia this morning?"

"It wouldn't surprise me, but being forewarned we should be able to cope with it."

"You mean when the others go off their rails we do likewise?"

"Precisely."

"Dash it all, it seems like taking a frightful risk. Why don't you go and leave me?"

"What did you say?" said Bulnes, glowering.

"But—I mean—you could say I had a headache . . ."

"It'd be an even worse risk to refuse. You're going. Dromon, what do we do now?"

"If you will follow me to the Agora, my master will lead you to the house of Perikles."

XVIII

SOKRATES greeted them cordially at the Agora; he evidently could not stay angry long with anybody who looked like a promising antagonist in an argument. Bulnes had tactfully worked the philosopher around to the subject of becoming their *prostates* when they arrived at the house of Perikles.

The Strategos greeted them with grave cordiality inside the door. Bulnes took a sharp look at the Athenian statesman this time. There was no doubt that the man was the Emperor. Meanwhile Perikles-Vasil was looking just as keenly at Bulnes. He said, in the manner of one making polite conversation:

"It is interesting to meet one of the fabled Tartessians. Are you of the race of the *Keltoi*, who are said to inhabit the westernmost parts of Europe?"

"No, Perikles," Flin spoke up. "We are the autochthones of Iberia, and cultivated the arts and sciences there centuries before the coming of the barbarous Kelts."

"Your name is Philon, my dear sir?" said Perikles.

As Perikles turned his head, Bulnes noticed the remarkable length of his skull, which projected backward to a conspicuous degree. Had he made a mistake after all? Vasil IX had no such bulge.

Within the andronitis Bulnes found all the philosophers he had already met —Protagoras, Demokritos, Anaxagoras, and Meton—and several others he did not know. Nobody bothered with in-

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troductions; all were too busy wagging their pointed beards in converse. Meton, for instance, was explaining his proposed calendar-reform and railing at the stupidity of the masses who insisted on using an obsolete and irrational system of time-reckoning from sheer force of habit.

Flin said: "That one with the squint is Diogenes."

"The old fellow who lived in a barrel?"

"No, you're thinking of the Cynic philosopher, who wouldn't be born yet. This is a scientist. And that's Prodikos, the one with the theories about the nature of myth, just back from Italy . . ."

Prodikos was telling Protagoras: ". . . and I stopped at Thourioi and saw Herodotos."

"How is the old fellow?"

"Still amazingly vigorous; working on a *History of Assyria,* and hopes to visit Athens next year . . ."

Anaxagoras was upbraiding young Demokritos, who tried to hide behind a pillar: ". . . so you come all the way from Abdera to study philosophy, and never think to seek out poor old Anaxagoras? What a heedless generation it is . . ." Demokritos was stammering apologies.

"Dinner, gentlemen," said Perikles, and the crowd padded barefoot into the andron.

Bulnes murmured to Flin: "I could surely use a double martini!"

He found himself paired with Antiphon the sophist, a youngish man about the age of Demokritos. Flin reclined on the next couch. A slave appeared with a towel and a basin and began to wash Bulnes's feet.

Antiphon looked at Bulnes with something like a sneer and said: "So Perikles, far from giving me the place of honor, puts me with a foreigner! That shows his true opinion of the better sort of people. No offense meant to you, my good man; after all, you cannot help where you were born."

THE interior of the house of Perikles was little different from the other houses Bulnes had seen; less sumptuous than that of Kallaischros, but perhaps a little neater and roomier than Meton's. A young woman who, Bulnes thought, would have been better for a good wash, sat on a stool and tweetled away mournfully on a thing like a clarinet. The monotonous little tune reminded Bulnes of a Gregorian chant.

Antiphon, his mouth full of endives, said: "Man of Tartessos, do not judge all Athenian banquets by this one. Our Long-Pate Zeus is really too serious-minded for party-giving. You should attend one of those of our livelier spirits, like the young Alkibiades . . ."

As the fare was spare and simple the actual eating did not take long. The clatter of argument among the philosophers almost drowned out the music of the *aulos.*

Perikles took a last bite of fig, cleared his throat, and said: "Gentlemen, before we begin the symposium, may I bring Aspasia in to listen?"

When nobody objected, Perikles spoke to a slave who went out. Antiphon said to Bulnes behind his hand: "That is one advantage of a concubine; you cannot decently bring a legal wife into such a gathering."

Aspasia swept in: a tall handsome woman of about Bulnes's own age. "Gentlemen!" she said. "It is most kind of you to permit me . . ." She sat on a chair instead of reclining.

Antiphon said: "Wait till they get under way; she will tie some of their fine theories into knots. Woman though she be, the Milesian has a shrewd and penetrating wit."

A pair of slaves lugged in three big bowls and set them on the floor in the middle of the horseshoe in which the couches were arranged, while others carried out the teetery little tables on which the food had been served. Bulnes, watching this process, felt his chiton twitched from behind, and there stood a slave holding out a fistful of straws.

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Taken aback for an instant, he glanced around, observing that several others had each drawn one. He drew one also.

Perikles presently announced: "The short straw has been drawn by the good Archelaos, who is hereby appointed Master of Ceremonies. Do you take command, O Archelaos."

The graybeard across the horseshoe from Bulnes rose and commanded: "Mix the wine in the proportion of two to one."

Bulnes thanked his stars that the lot had not fallen upon him in his ignorance. As the slaves poured the contents of one wine-jar and two water-jars into the big bowls, Antiphon said: "We should have Kratinos the comedy-writer in charge. He would mix one-to-one and then drink half a krater himself."

ARCHELAOS scooped some of the diluted wine out of one of the bowls with a ladle, said something about " . . . to the Olympian gods," and poured the wine on the floor. He poured two other libations: "To the Heroes," and "To Zeus the Savior," and sprinkled incense on the altar.

Bulnes realized that those about him were singing to the tune of the clarinet. He listened, trying to catch the words:

"In mighty flagons hither bring
The deep-red blood of many a vine
That we may largely quaff and sing
The praises of the god of wine."

"Now," said Archelaos, "the subject for this evening will be the origin of the universe."

Antiphon emitted a groan, echoed by several others of the company. "I knew it!" moaned the sophist. "One might as well die under Spartan spears as expire of boredom. The Anaxagoras will go on all night about his theory of primal seeds."

Archelaos frowned at Antiphon and continued: "I shall first call upon our young friend from Abdera. Speak, O Demokritos!"

Demokritos turned a bright red above his fuzzy beard. "I—uh—er—I do not really know—ah—uh—I am unworthy —uh—I pray, do not—"

"Come, come, have either cape or cloak," said Archelaos.

Demokritos smiled nervously. "Well —ah—Leukippos taught me that first there were atoms and the void, and—uh —after all I am nobody compared to the distinguished men here—but as these atoms fell through the void, we think—ah—the differences in their weights would cause some to fall faster than others, thus setting up eddies—uh—er —and these eddies condensed into solid particles—"

While Demokritos stumbled along, in obvious torment from embarrassment, Bulnes shot a glance at Perikles. The latter was looking at Demokritos with a faint and not unsympathetic smile; then down again to a piece of papyrus in his hand. Could that, Bulnes wondered, contain a list of those present, so that Perikles-Vasil could check them against the card-files of his pseudo-Greeks?

"I say, Knut! Watch Meton!" It was Flin's whisper from the next couch.

Bulnes saw that the astronomer was undergoing the same process that he had observed on the drill-field that morning. He swung his feet down from his couch and sat up, staring wildly; he exclaimed in Romaic: "Where am I? What is all this? Are you people pretending to be ancient Greeks, or what?"

DEMOKRITOS broke off, staring like the rest. Meton started to rise, then looked down as his sole garment, an unpinned chiton thrown carelessly around his body, began to fall to the floor. Meton clutched wildly.

Antiphon said: "By Herakles, that is the same seizure that is said to have smitten the soldiers on the drill-field this morning! Is Athens undergoing an epidemic of universal madness?"

"Damn it!" cried Meton. "Say something! Doesn't anybody understand me?"

Then Meton shuddered again, looked around a little foolishly, and resumed

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his couch.

Anaxagoras cried: "What ails you, O Meton?"

"Why?" said Meton in Classical Attic. "What do you mean? I had a slight feeling of dizziness just now and found myself standing, but now I feel perfectly normal."

"Do you not remember speaking gibberish?" asked Sokrates.

"Not at all. What is all this? Are you men jesting with me?"

Bulnes leaned toward Flin and murmured in English: "Perikles must have made arrangements to turn off the radiations for his guests one at a time, in a predetermined order."

"Oh-oh!" said Flin. "I knew we were ruddy fools to come. Let's get jolly well out of here!"

"Not yet. A few more like that will break up the party anyway, and we don't want to look conspicuous."

Aspasia said: "Go on, dear Demokritos. You were doing splendidly!"

The interruption, however, had so unstrung that shy young man that he was unable to get anything out but er's and ah's. At last Archelaos said: "We will come back to you, O Demokritos. Meanwhile the Sokrates, having been declared by the oracle to be the wisest man in Athens, will perhaps favor us with a few words on this profound subject?"

"It is notorious that I am the stupidest man in Athens," said Sokrates, "or I should not find it necessary to ask so many questions. As for the origin of the universe, I do not think that a question of much importance, since whatever caused it, it happened long ago, and the problems of leading a good and virtuous life are more pressing.

"However, since you wish it, I will tell you a story I have heard from my Pythagorean friends. They argue thus: as all corporeal things are generated, so much the cosmos have been generated, which implies a generator or maker. This maker, for lack of more definite knowledge, we call 'the gods.' Thus, you see, they avoid the crass materialism of our scientific colleagues. And this maker must have constructed the universe of the four elements theretofore existing—earth, air, fire, and water, as Empedokles teaches—leaving over no single particle or potency of any of these elements . . . ."

Bulnes, watching Archealos, saw him stiffen, look wonderingly at Sokrates, and cry in Modern Greek: "What's all this? I'm Eleftherios Protopapadakis, and I had just dismissed my class—"

This time the uproar drowned the words of both Sokrates and Archelaos. Then the latter sprawled back on his couch as if nothing had happened. Bulnes, watching, saw Perikles scrutinize the sheet of papyrus in his hand and make a motion that looked suspiciously like checking a name off a list. The party had now become so disorganized that it took five minutes for Archelaos and Perikles to quiet the guests.

"Let us continue," said Perikles, "Whatever these strange seizures be, they do not appear to last long or to have ill effects. Will you resume your talk, Sokrates?"

Sokrates resumed: ". . . . so the gods, in their first attempt at creating intelligent creatures, constructed androgynous bodies each with four arms and four legs. But these proving awkward, the gods in their kindness caused these creatures to fall asleep, and while they slept the gods split each of them lengthwise into two parts, one part being a human male and one a human female . . ."

THERE was more, about the mathematical proportions the gods had used in designing the universe, the super-souls of the earth and the stars, and the motions of the planets: all very involved and couched in jawbreaking compound terms.

Antiphon muttered: "He may not be the stupidest man in Athens, but he can certainly be the biggest bore when he tries."

Bulnes shook his head in assent.

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Finding the ideas expressed by Sokrates not only difficult to grasp but so scientifically obsolete as to be not worth grasping, he turned his attention again to Perikles.

The statesman, he saw, was frowning slightly, glancing at his papyrus and then up.

Bulnes said to Flin: "Look at Perikles. He's waiting for the next one."

"Looks to me as if he were wondering why the next one hasn't gone off. Notice how the blighter stares so fixedly at Aspasia!"

It was true. The glances of Perikles at his consort became longer and more intense until Aspasia herself became conscious of them and showed signs of unease. She even leaned towards Perikles and whispered a question into his ear.

Sokrates droned on: " . . . and thus the gods made bone: they sifted earth until it was pure and smooth, kneaded it, and moistened it with marrow, and by alternately dipping it in fire and water so wrought upon it that it was no longer soluble in either . . ."

"Knut!" said Flin in an undertone. "Don't you think Perikles expects Aspasia to be the next to go?"

Bulnes nodded. "I wonder why—by God, I know! She's an uncon—"

At that instant a scream cut through the monologue of Sokrates. Aspasia had leaped up from her chair and was backing away from Perikles, who had also risen.

"So," said Perikles, "you're the spy from Lenz, eh?"

"No—no—"

"Then how do you speak English?" Perikles advanced menacingly. Gone was his quietly-cordial, elder-statesman manner. The guests stared open-mouthed.

Aspasia retreated toward the door from the andron into the court. As she neared it she spun round in a whirl of draperies and ran. Perikles drew a dagger from his chiton and ran swiftly after her.

XIX

BULNES, glancing around, saw nothing suitable for a weapon save the ladle with which the wine in the kraters had been mixed. He leaped from his couch, snatched it up, and ran after Perikles.

Aspasia vanished through the door, Perikles after her, and Bulnes after Perikles. At the middle of the andronitis Aspasia detoured around the altar. The slight check enabled Perikles to catch up with her and drive the dagger into her back.

Almost simultaneously Bulnes, with a leap of his long legs, reached Perikles and struck him with the ladle on the back of the head. There was a crunching sound and Perikles fell forward over the body of his mistress.

"*Ea!* What is this?" cried Protagoras from the doorway. "What a horror! A sight for Aischylos to describe! I am leaving. Boy, my shoes and cloak! Hurry!"

All the other guests began shouting for their slaves and their gear. They streamed past the group in the court, some carrying their sandals and himatia without bothering to don them, and rushed out through the front door, crying: "The furies must have done this!" "A curse has fallen upon Athens!" "I was not even here this evening!"

Bulnes then heard exclamations among Perikles's own servants: "The master stabbed the mistress, and then the foreign gentleman broke the master's head . . ."

In a few seconds they, too, were running out. Bulnes knelt and pulled Perikles off the body of Aspasia. Both were still alive. Bulnes examined the head of Perikles and discovered that the projecting back of the head was a false structure of plaster, covered with a wig, which he had broken with the ladle. Perikles, he judged, was merely stunned. Aspasia was in worse case, blood dyeing her chiton.

Bulnes looked up. Flin and Sokrates

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stood beside him, but otherwise the house seemed empty. Sokrates said: "Such a devoted couple, too! And now all their fair-weather friends have run, lest one should be accused of having a hand in this business."

"How about you?" said Bulnes.

"I care not. How are they? Dead?"

Bulnes gave his diagnosis. Sokrates said: "The boy. Their son. Some older friends must prepare him, and I seem to be the one chosen by the gods for the purpose. I shall be back presently."

HE DISAPPEARED into the back of the house. The woman who had passed as Aspasia opened her eyes, stirred, and coughed up a little bloody froth. She said: "Get—message—to Lenz."

"Yes?" said Bulnes.

"Tell him—Vasil—suspects." She coughed. "If he—wants to seize—the machine—to use on the world—do it now."

"Why should Lenz wish to do that?" said Bulnes.

"Power. Tell him—hurry."

"And what's the Emperor up to?"

"To make—people happy. He thinks—they were happiest—in time of Perikles. If he can make all the world—live that way—he . . ." she went off into a spasm of coughing.

"Why is he running this dress-rehearsal, as it were?"

"He thinks—he can avoid—some of—the mistakes—of the original Perikles. Bring back the Golden Age."

Flin said: "For God's sake, Knut, let's do something for her—"

Bulnes waved him to silence. "Why," he asked Aspasia, "are you helping Lenz?"

"I work—for him. He pays well—and Vasil's—a fool."

"Where can we hide until we can carry this message?"

"Try Kleon. Enemy of Perikles."

"How accurate is this re-creation of Athens? Has Vasil any special means of viewing the past?"

"No. His experts—read books and studied relics—like other people. Tell—Lenz . . ."

Her voice trailed off and her eyes closed. Though her pulse still beat, she seemed to have lost consciousness. Bulnes said: "I don't know there's much we can do for her, Bil. No modern physicians or medicine, so she'll probably die shortly."

"How about him?"

"Merely a slight concussion."

"By Jove, that puts us in a fix! We can't very well carry her through the streets; the moving would probably kill her anyway; and if we leave her here he'll come to and finish her off."

Bulnes shrugged. "Unless I did *him* in now."

"Gad, not that!"

"You're probably right—for the wrong reason. No use bumping Vasil when Lenz would turn the conditioning-machine on the world. And as everybody knows we were the last to leave the house, he'll be able to figure out we're unconditioned. Therefore, it won't do for him to find us here when he comes to."

Bulnes felt Aspasia's pulse again; it was still going feebly. He felt guilty about leaving her, but as Wiyem had said they could neither take her with them (without being arrested) nor wait until she died or recovered.

"Sokrates is still around," he said. "He can do about as much as we can, which is damned little. Come on, we're going to Kleon's."

KLEON'S porter said: "I will call the master."

After a considerable wait the door opened and a big voice rumbled: "Come in, you two. What is this great news?"

The torchlight showed a man as tall as Knut Bulnes, but stout and potbellied, with a great mop of curly hair, a scanty beard, a snub-nose, and small close-set eyes. The man, Bulnes judged, must be some years younger than himself. As he looked more closely he realized that

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the other was holding a short Greek sword in one hand.

"It is this, O Kleon—" began Flin, but subsided when Bulnes trod on his toes.

Bulnes, sizing up Kleon, said: "Excuse the intrusion at such an unseemly hour, good Kleon, but the news is indeed momentous, especially for you. First, know that we are but two travelling philosophers from far Tartessos, who—"

"Get on with it!" said Kleon. "Is the Perikles dead, or what?"

"Not exactly."

"How do you mean, not exactly?"

"The news is almost that important. But hear me. We, having through no fault of our own fallen foul of Perikles, are seeking sanctuary, for as unregistered foreigners we have little protection. In return for our news we look to you to provide it."

Kleon thought, then said: "If you do not mind living with my slaves, and if your news be as important as you say, very well. Now let us have it."

"Perikles has just murdered Aspasia."

"*What?* Impossible!"

"True nevertheless. And before all the philosophers of Athens, so you can easily confirm my story."

"Tell me, quickly! No, first come in and shut that door. We do not wish all the world from Caria to Carthage to hear."

Bulnes told the tale of the symposium.

"By the twelve postures of Kyrenë!" shouted Kleon, slapping his thigh. "This is indeed the world's wonder!" He began pacing back and forth in the andronitis, soliloquizing: "This will finish that compromiser, that seducer of the people! Now they shall come into their own. No more appeasment of Sparta; no more pampering the subject cities. Athens shall be mistress of an empire like that of the Great King. Every Athenian citizen a king!"

He slashed the air with his sword.

"And I will show the rotten rich, too! Kleon the Tanner they call me, the perfumed weaklings, because I make my living by honest slave-driving instead of letting some slimy metic manage my affairs. Well, I will tan their hides so they shall long remember it! I will grind them underfoot as I will grind our rebellious and ungrateful allies. But how to topple old Long-Pate from his pedestal? Ha?" He glared at Bulnes, teeth bared in a mirthless grin.

Bulnes said: "Not being familiar with Athenian law, I do not know, but—could not he be arrested for murder?"

"Who should arrest him? Action against a murderer must be brought before the King by the next of kin of the victim. Aspasia was a Milesian with no relatives in Athens, save her son by Perikles who is only a boy."

Flin squeaked: "Could not her patron take action in such a case?"

"Yes, save that her patron is this same Perikles. Would you have him accuse himself?"

"Well then, could not the Polemarchos, as legal guardian of all metics, do it?"

"You raise a nice point of law which, so far as I know, had never been settled. It might work—we Athenians have no patience with legal subtleties that defeat justice. First, however, I think I had better go to the Tholos and take up the matter with the President of the Council. The Presidency will call a special assembly tomorrow to remove Perikles from office for unfit conduct. You two wait here, and do not dare to go out until I return! Boy, my shoes and himation, at once, and tell Sosias and Geta to fetch their staves and torches."

XX

AS THE front door closed behind Kleon's bulky form, Flin said: "That's a dangerous man, Knut."

"So I gathered. What did the real one do?"

"I believe when he got power he persuaded the Assembly to have the

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whole population of some city massacred or enslaved because they wouldn't join the Delian League—no, that was another time. He did carry such a motion, but then somebody else persuaded 'em to cancel the order, and the people were saved in the nick of time."

Bulnes said: "We'll have to watch ourselves. You know, comrade, I can't help feeling I've seen Kleon somewhere before, too."

"I wonder who he could be in everyday life?"

"I don't know; it's just a feeling. At least some things are becoming clearer."

"Such as?" said Flin.

"Vasil's general pattern. What happened to the original Athens at this point?"

"The Peloponnesian Wark broke out, you know."

"Yes, but in detail?"

"Oh, good heavens, it was a long and complicated war . . ."

"The Athenians lost?"

"In the long run, yes."

"And that war, you say, ruined Classical Greece?"

"More or less," said Flin.

"Why did Athens lose?"

"As nearly as I can remember, several reasons. One was that Perikles died of a plague at the outset, and the Assembly went off its rails without him to guide it. They elected people like Kleon and Alkibiades to be their leaders, and did irresponsible things, like executing all their generals because, when they won a naval battle, they failed to recover all the bodies of their dead."

"Temperamental, no?"

"Also, they'd been exploiting the subject states of their empire until the latter hated them and were glad to break away."

"My dear Bil, I thought they were the great ancient democracy?"

"They were. You're used to modern history, in which aristocrats and authoritarians are the imperialists. In Athens the common people were imperialists and militarists, while the rich and the aristocrats were for peace and moderation."

"I begin to see," said Bulnes. "Vasil thinks Periklean Athens was a high-point in civilization, and that if Perikles hadn't made some errors of judgment, and hadn't died at a critical time, it would have gone on getting better and better. So, Vasil thinks, why not recreate it by means of the conditioning-machine his scientists have developed, and run the picture over with himself playing Perikles? This time, however, he'll profit by the experience of the real Perikles. He'll stave off the war with Sparta; he'll conciliate the allies, offering them union on equal terms as a modern statesman would do. Then when he's reëstablished the ideal civilization on a stable basis, he'll build up a super-conditioner and put the entire world under its influence."

"How could he, since the Emperor has no political power?"

"How could he get this far? Lenz let him, either to keep him out of his hair or, more likely, because Lenz hopes to use the conditioner himself on the world. If Vasil weren't fundamentally a fool, as Aspasia said, he'd have seen that. What a way to keep everybody under control! And you could justify it by saying that they were all as happy as possible, even if they weren't in their right minds."

Flin said: "Another thought. When Vasil was new on the throne there were stories about his being bored with mere social leadership, dictating the length of the lace on men's cuffs and all that rot. Perhaps this is his idea of being a ruler in fact as well as in name."

"Well, you can't blame him for being bored, since he seems to be a man of imagination, even if not a second Franklin Roosevelt or Henri Quatre. Maybe he likes running things on a small-scale face-to-face basis, the way they do here, instead of wrestling with the impersonal red-tape of the World Government."

Kleon returned to his house some time

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later, grinning. "I fixed them!" he roared. "The Perikleans among the Prytaneis tried to delay things, but I showed them! The trumpeters have already gone out to sound a special assembly for tomorrow morning. It is too bad that you two cannot witness my triumph. We were going to attack Perikles through some of his friends, but this is quicker. To your pallets, foreigners, and do not try to leave. I may need you as witnesses if there is a trial."

AN HOUR before dawn the blat of the trumpets awoke Knut Bulnes. As he listened, the notes died away, to be repeated from a greater distance, and then a still greater until they were barely audible. That, he thought, would be the trumpeters sent out the previous night to the neighboring towns of Attika: Peiraieus, Acharnai, and the rest.

When he and Flin crawled out of their smelly little cubicle they found Kleon in the court, muffled in his himation and pacing restlessly.

"I go," said the Tanner. "You two may eat what you like; get drunk, bed a slave-girl, it is all the same to me. But do not leave until I permit you. *Iai* for the people of Athens!"

He nodded towards his front door, where a couple of stalwart slaves with clubs stood prepared to enforce the order, then strode out. Flin looked at Bulnes and said: "Last night this seemed like a nice, safe refuge from Perikles; today it seems more like a trap."

Bulnes smiled thinly. "My thought precisely, my dear friend. I suppose we shall have to spend the morning on vocabulary-drill while the excitement goes on at the Assembly."

Bulnes was halfway through the list of proparoxytone adjectives when the porter accosted him: "Sir, there is a Scythian archer at the door, one Pardokas, to see you. Shall I admit him?"

"By all means," said Bulnes. Then, as Diksen came in: "My dear Roi, how the devil did you find us?"

Diksen grinned. "You can't hide nothing from slaves, see? The Gricks talk like we wasn't even there, and of course we pick things up and trade 'em back and forth. What's the dope on the big-shot sticking a shiv in his beasel?"

Bulnes told him.

"Geez, what do you know?" said Diksen. "Things is hotting up. I s'pose this means I gotta stay up all day." He yawned. "Gotta get over to the Pnyx for this special assembly. Don't take no wooden nickels!"

THE morning dragged on. Towards noon Bulnes heard Kleon's bellow outside. As the Tanner came in he took a crack at the porter with his walking-stick, roaring: "That will teach you to open promptly when I call! Ho there, you Tartessians!"

"Yes?" said Bulnes. "Did something go wrong?"

"It might have been worse. I had presented my case, and all was going well, when the followers of the Perikles made an uproar, yelling like Illyrians till the President declared he felt an earthquake and adjourned the session because the gods were displeased. Gods!" He spat. "I had no time to bring up my main point—that for a long time Perikles has been receiving mysterious visitors who slip away from his house and disappear. One of my men followed one of these to the Theseion, where the fellow vanished into thin air. Spartan spies without doubt, arranging the betrayal of Athens. However, we shall continue tomorrow. Where is my lunch? Quick, scum, before I beat you to a jelly!"

The slaves scurried to obey. As they waited there came another knock. In came a man.

"What is it, Hermippos?" said Kleon.

The man replied: "The squill-head is rallying his friends on the Akropolis with arms! We shall have a tyranny by nightfall, if nothing hinders."

"What stops us?" said Kleon. "We have arms too."

"But the constitution—"

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"Drat the constitution! I will give the people a better one, when I have ground their enemies into the mire. Sosias, my arms! Hermippos, run, tell Glykon and Diopithes and Drakontides and our other friends to arm themselves and rouse their friends . . . here, I had better give you a list. Where is that worthless secretary of mine? Tell them to mark a big delta on their shields, with charcoal, delta for *demos*. Let them assemble on the path leading up to the Propylaia within the hour." As he spoke, his slaves helped him into his greaves and cuirass.

Flin said: "This isn't in character either. The original Perikles was a good democrat who was once legally deposed without attempting violence."

"This isn't the original Perikles," said Bulnes. "He only thinks he is . . . my dear Kleon, you have no more reason to keep us here. Let us go, if you will be so kind, and if you wish us later you can get in touch with us at the inn of Podokles."

"Go to the crows, for all I care! Now let me think; we want Hagnon and Simmias and Lakratidas . . ."

Bulnes and Flin slipped out and headed for the Akropolis. Bulnes said: "If Kleon wins—"

"That dreadful man?"

"Precisely, colleague. If he wins that'll end the experiment, no matter what happens to Vasil. Somebody'll turn off the conditioner—"

"Not necessarily. Lenz might simply take it over, whether Vasil's killed or not, as the first step in his own program."

"Then I suppose, my dear Bil, it's up to us to turn it off."

"How?" said Flin.

"*No sé.* If we had some explosives, or even a power-saw . . ."

"Could we loop a rope around the neck of the statue and pull it over?"

"Doubt it. You'd need half the rope in the Arsenal of Philon and a couple of hundred men . . . *Dios!*" Bulnes clapped a hand to his head. "I know who Kleon is!"

"Who?"

"The long-lost Prince Serj, Vasil's brother! I knew I'd seen those pig's eyes somewhere."

Flin said: "How can that be? There's not that much difference between their ages."

"There's about twenty years, in actual fact, and I think Vasil uses makeup to look older. Just another of his queer ideas, to dispose of his brother by conditioning him to play the part of one of Perikles's enemies."

XXI

AS THEY neared the Akropolis, Bulnes became aware of occasional armed men making their way in the same direction. When they got within sight of the saddle between the Akropolis and the Areopagos he saw several clumps of such men standing around the path that zigzagged up to the Propylaia, and a continuous trickle of more men arriving. Most of those in the groups were holding shield and spear in one hand to have the other free for forensic gestures. As they approached, the sound of universal argumentation came to Bulnes's ears like the cackle of a colossal barnyard.

Flin said: "At least at this stage the Athenians were still a fighting race, and hadn't come to depend on mercenaries yet."

They paused to watch at a safe distance from the hoplites, along with many other unarmed or undecided Athenians. As the armed men became more numerous they gradually coalesced into two sets, one of the partisans of Kleon (identified by the triangle on their shields) and the other those of Perikles. The two sets shouted arguments, threats, and insults at each other.

Somebody among the Perikleans (who straggled up towards the Propylaia, leaving the Kleonians on the lower slopes) noticed the letter on the shields

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carried by the men of his own side.

Kleon puffed up the slope at last, towering over his partisans like a liner among tugs. Bulnes could hear his bull's voice but not make out the words. "Let's move a little closer," he suggested to Flin.

Bulnes and Flin climbed higher up the saddle on the Areopagos side, where they had a good view. Kleon was pointing off to the northeast and crying:

"Athenians, look upon the statues of the famous Tyrannicydes! Will you endure that another tyranny be riveted about your necks? It is time we had another heroic Harmodios, another Aristogeiton . . ."

The stream of Perikleans up the path had abated; only a few straggled up now. Kleon roared: "On which side strive these two coming up the path? Perikleans? Slay them! *Elleleleu!*"

There was a rush of hoplites and a clash of spear-points on bronze. Then one Periklean was down with men jabbing at him, while the other, throwing away spear and shield and discarding his helmet as he ran, bounded down the path faster than his more heavily burdened pursuers could follow.

"Come back up here!" yelled Kleon. "Do not let yourselves be scattered."

"Look that way," said Flin, pointing.

BELOW, somebody had organized a group of Perikleans and was marching them rapidly eastward along the north foot of the Akropolis. The afternoon sun gleamed on their arms. Kleon must have seen them too, for he hustled together a group of his men and ordered them: "Hurry to the back stairs of the Akropolis, and block it, lest any more partisans of the satyr-king go up that way!"

He waddled about, pushing men into the positions he thought they ought to take and haranguing everyone within earshot.

Bulnes said: "They seem to take all day to get organized. At this rate it'll be dark before they start fighting."

"He's probably trying to make political arrangements before joining battle," said Flin. "See those chaps coming up? There's the Polemarchos, and there's the King, and the rest are the other Archons. Kleon's a clever lad; wants the law on his side if possible."

Bulnes and Flin sat down, watching, while interminable conferences took place, with endless wagging of hands and heads and messengers coming and going. In particular, messengers ran up the path into the Propylaia and back down to Kleon.

At length Kleon came to a decision and began marshalling his forces. "The squill-head," he roared, "says he will treat with us up on the Akropolis, on the east porch of the Propylaia. Form a column of fours; hold yourselves ready; don't straggle. It may be a trap. Stay together."

"Vasil is up to something," said Bulnes. "Let's go up with them."

That, however, proved easier said than done, for under Kleon's direction his men crowded up the path to the Propylaia so closely packed that there was no room for a mere spectator. Presently the column halted and began to bunch up.

"Spread out into the Propylaia!" yelled Kleon. "Make way; I am coming up. What do you two want?" he exclaimed, turning on Bulnes and Flin, who were trying to ride his wake up the crowded path.

"My dear Kleon," said Bulnes, "I know more about the plans and methods of Perikles than you can imagine. If you will kindly let us come up with you we may be of help."

"What do you expect for your help, eh?"

"Merely to see right triumph."

"Huh. Well, come along."

THEY pushed their way up to the Propylaia, where the crowd lessened somewhat because the men had spread out among the pillars and along the steps of this great gateway.

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At the east side of the Propylaia, where the steps reached the level of the Akropolis, Kleon's men ranked solidly among the columns. Looking between the plumes of the helmets Bulnes saw why: a few paces away stood a counter-rank of Perikleans, shields lined up and spears poised at shoulder-height.

Kleon pushed through his own men into the open space between the two armies. At least, Bulnes thought, the demagogue was no coward, to place himself where a single well-cast spear could end his burgeoning political career.

"O Perikles!" shouted Kleon. "Come forth!"

"I am here," said Perikles, who had climbed up on a great bronze chariot behind the front rank of his own men. He wore his usual Corinthian helmet pushed back to show the Olympian calm of his regular features. Behind the chariot towered Athenë Promachos.

Kleon spoke: "What means this attempt at tyranny, you murderer, you traitor, you tool of the rich, you creature of the Spartans?"

"No tyranny," said the brisk voice of Perikles, "but an effort to forestall an act by the Athenians which they might regret later. I have a message for them from the goddess Athenë herself."

"Do you expect us to believe that you, a notorious atheist, would be entrusted with a divine message?"

"No; the goddess herself shall speak to you."

"Ha-ha . . . I suppose you will dress a tall woman in armor and pass her off as Athenë, as did the other tyrant?"

"Not at all. Pallas Athenë herself shall speak, right now." Perikles turned and waved an arm towards the collossus. "Speak, O goddess!"

Bulnes, not knowing quite what to expect, almost jumped out of his skin when a tremendous voice thundered forth from the statue of Athenë Promachos:

"Men of Athens! Athenë speaks to you. Know that the Perikles is no tyrant, nor yet a traitor or murderer, but my best-beloved foster-son. Trust him, follow him, support him in every way, and he will insure glory, peace, and prosperity for you and for your descendants, and honorable burial for you all. Turn against him, and nothing awaits you but defeat, poverty, and destruction. Those of you who have impulsively taken up arms against him, return to your homes and store your arms against the day when Athens shall lead all Hellas against the threatening hordes of encircling barbarians. Obey the laws, preserve the peace, uphold Perikles, and join him in making Athens a beacon-light for the world. I have spoken."

There was a moment of utter silence when the great voice stopped, broken by a squeal from Flin: "By Gad, a public-address system!"

Then came a clatter of arms as Kleon's men retreated precipitously down the path from the Propylaia towards the city.

XXII

BULNES, followed by Flin, plunged into the mob and caught Kleon's military mantle as the politician trotted down the steps of the Propylaia with the rest of the rout.

"What now?" said Kleon, turning a fat face gray with terror.

"It is a trick!" said Bulnes. "Perikles has a machine for enlarging the voice, hidden in that statue. I can prove it, and I can destroy the machine. Rally your men before they all melt away."

"Rally!" bawled Kleon instantly. "It is a trick! I can prove it! No goddess, but a bit of Thessalian witchcraft! It is a trick! To me, my men!" He turned to Bulnes. "You had better be right; if this be a trick on *your* part it will be your last. Hagnon! Diopithes! This way! Catch those runagates. It is a trick of the same sort Peisistratos played with the woman Phyë."

He rushed about, catching a man here and a man there, shaking them, pushing them, and by sheer force of person-

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ality rounding up nearly half his original force.

"And now?" said Kleon.

"Make sure you have the Propylaia blocked," said Bulnes, "so the Perikleans cannot come down. Then fetch me a lot of straw—say a few dozen beds—and a couple of jars of oil."

"What are you going to do?" whispered Flin.

"It just occurred to me that a good hot fire would melt the gravito-magnetic connections in the statue."

"What are you saying?" said Kleon.

"Never mind; get me that straw and oil, and a torch."

Kleon gave the orders that sent a score of men running down the hill into the city.

Bulnes said: "Make a speech or something to keep your men occupied until they get back."

"O Kleon!" called a man with a pi on his shield. "Perikles wishes to know when you will obey the commands of the goddess."

"Tell him to give us time. This is too serious a matter to be decided without a discussion." Kleon addressed his own men: "Men of Athens, you know that Athenë, most virtuous of deities, would not employ a notorious murderer and traitor as her messenger to mortals. What you have heard is certainly very impressive, but let us not be fooled as were our great-grandparents by Peisistratos of infamous memory a century ago. I have reason to believe that the voice you heard was a trick . . ."

He went on and on until the men he had sent out began to trickle back up the hill with their arms full of pallets.

"Kindly give me a few men to help me, my good Kleon," said Bulnes.

Under Bulnes's direction they dragged their burdens out along the cliff-path leading to the Caves of Apollo and Pan. He led them into the Cave of Pan, into the passage to the priest-hole (at the sight of which some of them whistled) and into the tunnel leading back from that recess to the main subterranean tunnel-system. He turned right at the intersection, climbed the slope, and presently stood under the interior bracing of the big statue.

He said to Flin, puffing beside him: "Wish I could knock off the lady's head to improve the draft. You men, do you see those things up inside the statue that look something like women's hair-ornaments? That is where your 'divine voice' came from. Pour some of that oil on the pallets and stuff them up inside the statue as far as you can. Not too much noise; we don't want to alarm those outside."

When the oil-soaked pallets were all pushed into place, Bulnes himself thrust the torch at the nearest. The straw caught fire with a *floomp*, and then they were trotting hastily out of the tunnel with thick smoke billowing behind them. The straw roared and crackled.

BACK at the Propylaia, Bulnes said to Kleon: "You may go back up above again; in a short while Perikles's divine voice will be stilled for good."

"Out of my way," said Kleon, and stamped up the marble steps. At the porch he halted. The Periklean forces had come forward a little way with the retreat of the Kleonians, but most of them were still massed around the chariot on which Perikles stood. Beyond the chariot, little curls of black smoke were beginning to issue from the Promachos.

"O Perikles!" roared Kleon. "Look behind you! So much for your pretended goddess! If it was not a trick, let Athenë speak again!"

Perikles looked around, uttered an exclamation, dropped off the chariot, and hurried over to the statue. He fumbled among her brazen skirts and opened the same little door that Bulnes had come out of on the previous occasion. Then he leaped back as a mass of bright yellow flame roared out, preventing him from closing the door again. The improved draft stimulated the fire, for its roar became plainly aud-

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ible and the volume of smoke greatly increased.

Perikles strode purposefully towards Kleon and Bulnes. He pushed through the front rank of his own hoplitai, exclaiming: "So that is what you have been up to! Well, if the play is to end, at least you shall not live to succeed me, you self-seeking rabble-rouser!"

He whipped a pistol out from under his cloak, took careful aim at Kleon (who stared uncomprehendingly at the device) and fired. The crack of the firearm mingled with the explosion of the bullet. Bulnes felt warm wetness spatter him, and looked around in time to see Kleon, his head gone, fall backwards.

"The Tartessian!" said Perikles in English. "Another spy for Lenz, eh?"

Perikles swung his pistol up, then brought it down slowly, drawing a bead on Bulnes's belly. The editor stood helplessly, unable to dodge, run, or attack. The Emperor's finger tightened on the trigger.

From behind Bulnes came a flat unmusical snap, followed in the same fraction of a second by the thump of an arrow striking a human target. Perikles staggered back and fired one wild shot. The bow twanged again. With two arrows in his chest, Perikles-Vasil fell back upon the flagstones.

"Didn't get here none too soon, did I?" said Roi Diksen. "Hey, look at Flin—the guy's fainted!"

At that instant the same strange agitation began to creep over the crowd of armed men that Bulnes had seen on the drill-field and again at the house of Perikles: men dropped their spears and shields as if they had never seen them before and turned in wonderment and alarm to ask each other in Modern Greek who and where they were.

Bulnes stepped forward to where lay Vasil Hohnsol-Romano, Emperor of the Earth, and picked up the pistol.

The Emperor looked up and said faintly: "Fools! I'd have made you a heaven on earth. The mob never knows what's—good for . . ."

His head lolled and he was dead.

Diksen said: "Hey, Mr. Bulnes, the gimmick must be off!"

Bulnes gestured toward the statue of Athenë Promachos. The fire was beginning to burn itself out, though the statue still glowed redly in spots. He said: "That's our doing."

"Yeah? Then we're the only folks here knows what the score is. You better get up and tell 'em."

"I suppose so." Bulnes wearily hoisted himself on to the bronze chariot and spoke in Romaic:

"Gentlemen! If you will kindly listen to me I shall tell you what has happened . . ."

AN HOUR later he had finished his explanation, answered questions, and organized the nearest Greeks into an impromptu government of Athens: some to go down into the city and repeat his explanation to the bewildered people there; others to police the town until it could reorganize itself; others to accompany Bulnes into the tunnels. Diksen he made police-chief, despite the latter's wails of protest: "But I tell you I don't *want* no damn job here! I wanna get back to good old Yonkers!"

Flin, revived, said: "I'm going right down to the Peiraieus to find Thalia!"

"Wait, my dear comrade," said Bulnes. "I have a task—"

"Oh, find somebody else! I haven't got a minute to spare!" And off the small man trotted.

Bulnes led his men back to the Cave of Apollo, into the tunnel from the priest-hole, and by turning left at the T brought them to the door opening into the main tunnels. This time he pushed the bell-button.

After a while the door opened, disclosing a surprised-looking man in khaki trousers and shirt.

Bulnes said: "Out of the way, my dear sir. The Emp's dead and the broadcasting-machine is wrecked. The show's over."

The man went for a pistol. Bulnes

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whipped up the Emperor's gun and fired, *crack!* When he could see again, after the flash of the explosion of the projectile, the man was a gory mess lying on the floor without his right arm.

Bulnes picked up the man's pistol, handed it to the nearest Greek, and led his men down the tunnel to the entrance beneath the Theseion. The man at the desk looked up open-mouthed as Bulnes thrust his pistol into his face and said: "Give me the key to the machine-gun rack, quickly, if you please."

Bulnes unlocked the rack and passed out the guns. In fifteen minutes he and his men had a hundred-odd employees of the project rounded up and facing various walls with their hands up. All the switches had been pulled, including that which controlled the force-walls surrounding Greece.

BULNES told the Greeks: "Take them out and chain them up in the Oikema until we decide what to do with them. Here you, my good man, where is there an outside telephone?"

When he found the 'phone he dialled long-distance, then England, then Trafalgar 9-0672.

"Are you there?" he said. "Is this *Trends Magazine?* Good. Put me through to Mr. Biird, please. Robert? Knut Bulnes speaking. I have a story for you; put the recorder on . . ."

When he had given his editor-in-chief an account of the Periklean Project and his part in the recent events, he rang off and dialled Dagmar Mekrei's apartment.

"Why, Knut, darling!" she exclaimed when he had identified himself. "What on earth happened to you? You disappeared off the face of the earth last month . . . ."

"You'll read all about it in tomorrow's papers, darling. I'm in Athens—"

"But you can't be! That's reserved territory!"

"Not any more, *mariposa*. Travel should be reëstablished in a few days."

"You'll be coming back to London?"

"Not quite yet: Bob Biird was so pleased with the story I gave him that he told me to take as long as I liked. It happens that my little ship is at the bottom of the harbor—"

"Oh, how dreadful!"

"—and it'll take weeks to raise her, since there's no modern salvage apparatus here. I thought you might like to fly down here as soon as the airlines are running again, stay here sightseeing while I get the ship up, and sail back to England with me."

"Oh—Knut—"

"Yes?"

"I'm dreadfully sorry but—I'm married."

"You *what?*"

"Married. Remember Kaal Beiker? He's been asking me a long time, and when you disappeared—well—"

"When was this?"

"Four days ago. He moved in with me, and I expect him home from work any time now."

Bulnes gulped, feeling the blood rush to his face. "Well—uh—thanks for telling me. I hope—I hope—oh, hell! Good-bye, Dagmar."

He hung up and turned unsteadily from the telephone. When he had pulled himself together he commandeered one of the power-scooters used in the tunnels. A couple of Greeks helped him manhandle it out of the tunnel, and he set off for the inn of Podokles.

AN HOUR later he arrived, in dungarees and yachting-cap, in front of the house of Euripides in the Peiraieus. He parked the motor-scooter in the street and, with a bundle under his arm, knocked on the door.

Euripides himself opened. When Bulnes explained who he was, Euripides said: "Come in, come in. I'm really Kostis Vutiras, formerly a reporter for the *Athenian Herald*. Your friend Flin is here, and has been telling me that for seven or eight years I've been living the life of Euripides the ancient poet. I

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should find it hard to believe, except for this . . . ."

He tugged the fantastic beard and led the way in.

"It is a little embarrassing," he continued in a lowered voice, "as you can imagine, to find that the woman you've been sleeping with for years belonged to somebody else all the time—but then we have to take a sensible attitude. I have a wife somewhere too, and God knows what she's been up to."

Flin was sitting on an Athenian eating-couch with his arm around the buxom Thalia. Bulnes looked at Thalia, who greeted him without any sign of remembering his previous visit. He said: "Here are your modern clothes, my dear Wiyem. God save me from riding a motor-scooter over these alleged roads again!"

Thalia asked: "Have you been in touch with London yet, Knut?"

"Yes. I 'phoned the story in to my magazine, and spoke to Dagmar."

"How is dear Dagmar after all these years?"

"She's somebody else's dear Dagmar now. She married that fellow Beiker a few days ago." He looked at the others with dawning suspicion. "By God, I'll bet that's why he was so keen to pass on that rumor about all the Greeks having been shanghaied back to Greece, so Bil would urge this cruise and I'd be gotten out of the way!"

Thalia said: "Oh, Knut, I'm sorry!" while Flin, after a futile effort to control his features, burst into a guffaw.

"You find it amusing?" said Bulnes.

"I'm s-sorry, Knut, really. But you go around all these years saying you won't be tied down by marriage and no ruddy woman is worth it and all that rot, and when you get stood up—"

"It serves him right," said Thalia. "The way he kept the poor girl dangling so long, it's no wonder . . ."

Flin had been going through his clothes, and now brought from one of the pockets a radio no bigger than a cigarette case. He snapped it on.

"Where'd you get that?" said Bulnes

"Had it all the time, but it didn't work inside the force-wall."

The radio said: "We interrupt this program to bring another special bulletin. News of the unmasking of the late Emperor's Periklean Project, as it is called, has reached the World Parliament in New York and has caused tremendous excitement. A number of the Populist supporters of Prime Minister Rudolf Lenz have deserted him and gone over to the Diffusionists. It now appears certain that the government will fall, and that the twelve-year strong-arm rule of the Lenz Ministry is at an end. The coronation of fourteen-year-old Crown Prince Seril will take place . . . ."

FLIN said: "Wonder what they'll do with all these magnificent reproductions of ancient buildings? Tear 'em down and set up the authentic ruins again?"

Euripides-Vutiras was pouring wine. Bulnes said: "At least we can now drink our wine straight without being thought barbarians."

"What are your immediate plans, Knut?" asked Flin.

"To raise my boat. I don't suppose you'd be interested . . . ."

"Oh, no! We're rushing back to England as soon as there's transportation. Why don't you ask Diksen to go with you? He's a handy young chap."

"Not a bad idea," sighed Bulnes, feeling old and unloved. "Anyway, hereafter I'll do as I like, eat what I like, and not what some megalomaniac emperor thinks I ought—"

"Indeed?" said Vutiras. "Has it occurred to you that even in your so-called normal, modern, twenty-seventh-century world, you may be merely somebody's puppet, as Mrs. Flin and I were in this—only you haven't been clever enough to penetrate back-stage yet?"

Bulnes and Flin exchanged an appalled glance. The latter said: "Oh, my goodness gracious! What a perfectly beastly idea!" ● ● ●

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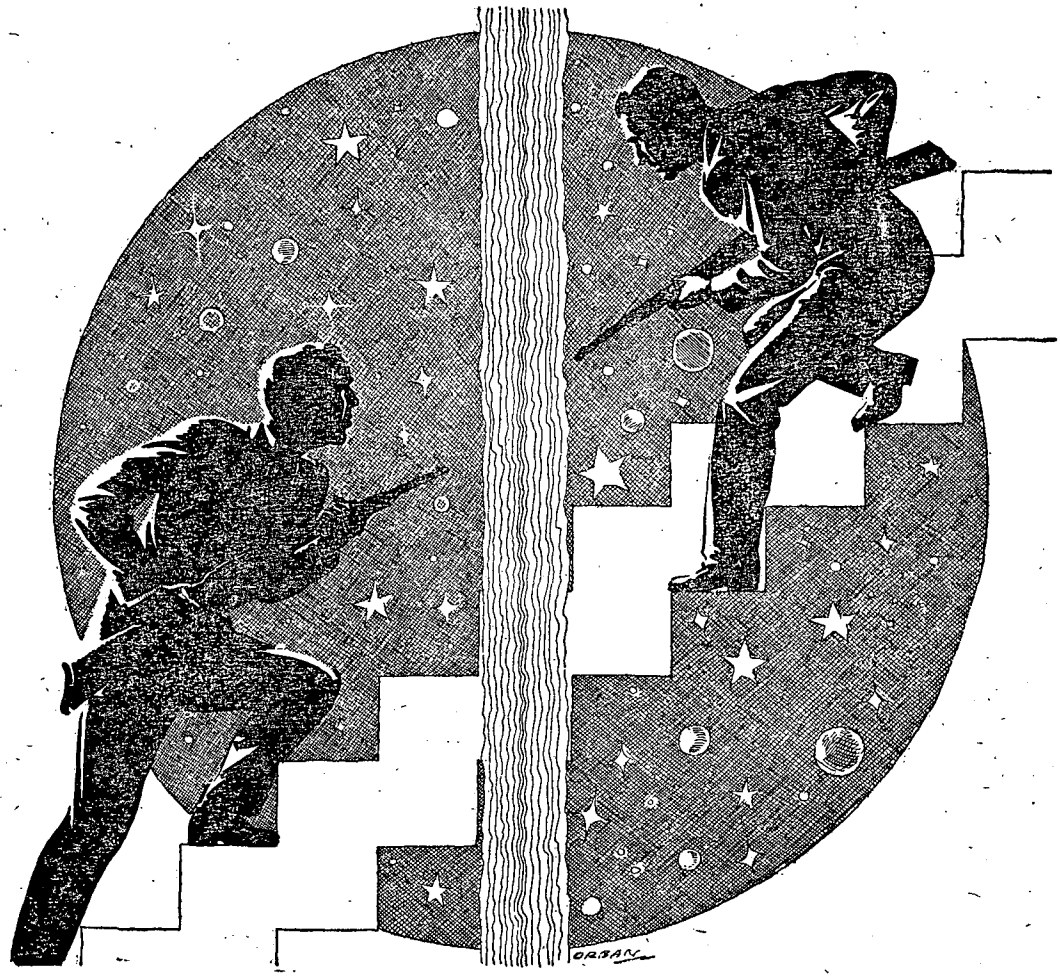

THE INTRUDER

By OLIVER SAARI

THE first thing Baldwin felt was the cool pressure of the inhalator cone against his face. Sluggishly his thoughts unwound from a soft, sticky darkness. He'd been asleep — no! — he'd been drugged! He breathed deeply and let the sweet-smelling antidote fill his lungs.

Images solidified: first the pretty face of the stewardess, then the room. A private room, of course, for him . . . Memory returned, and with it a cons-

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To have an exact duplicate of yourself show up and take over your business, your wife? . . . brother, it's murder!

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ciousness of regret. Regret that the Ultrabeam Jump was sensually so unpleasant as to make anesthesia necessary. There was a certain loss of dignity in being doped and bundled about like a piece of luggage . . . Still, a day's drugged sleep was a small price to pay for spanning the gulf between the stars.

"You should lie down and rest awhile, Sir," said the stewardess.

Noting a nervous, hesitant quality to her voice, Baldwin looked at her more attentively. What was there in her manner that made him uneasy? She seemed too scared, too unsure of herself . . .

He was not on the ship.

The realization brought all his senses into sudden focus. This luxurious room was not the cramped cabin of an Ultrabeam transport. It was more like the room he'd had at the Alpha Centauri Station, but not the same one. His luggage was piled neatly in the corner.

"Why was I moved?"

"Mr. Carmody's orders, sir."

"Mr. Carmody's orders!" repeated Baldwin in astonishment, "Who does he think he —"

He bit off the words as the girl opened a door and dodged past a blue-uniformed guard who stood squarely in the opening. A golden sunburst on the broad chest was marked *Baldwin Transstellar Special Police,* and the uniform cap said *Solar Station.* Baldwin knew, then, that he'd made the Jump and arrived at his destination. Carmody must have had him moved off the ship like any third-class passenger! Why?

The guard stood a head taller than Baldwin, barring his way. "Sorry, sir, you can't go through just now."

"Look here! I'm T. J. Baldwin. I own this place. I can fire you *and* whoever gave the stupid order you're following."

"Wait, please, sir—"

The uniformed man was nervous but unyielding.

BALDWIN tried to push past the guard, but was stopped effectively. He felt a sudden pang of fear and an accelerating of his heart. What could have gone wrong? His last feeling before anesthesia on the transport had been one of well-being, a memory of accomplished objectives. The local government had wanted Transstellar to move its Centauri Station a billion miles farther out. They'd claimed that Proxima, the third sun of their system, was moving too close to the beam and making operation dangerous. Baldwin had gone to fight the order and he'd licked it, saving the company millions. There had been a few short cuts in his victory, of course, but nothing that could lead to his legitimate arrest. Why, then, was he being held prisoner in this room?

"I wish to see Commander Carmody," he said very coldly, stepping back.

The guard was spared from answering by the hurried appearance of a beefy, perspiring man in platinum-braided uniform.

The newcomer stopped just inside the room, the folds in his chin deepening as he saw Baldwin.

"You're up! I told them not to wake you."

"You—Carmody," snapped Baldwin. "Tell this idiot to move his muscles out of my way. Tell him who I am."

"I don't know *who* you are," said Carmody in a peculiar tone.

Baldwin stared at him. He knew now that something was really wrong, that the Commander was playing a game with roots in something deep. Perhaps someone higher up was involved . . . The thought made him blanch.

"I don't know who you are," repeated Carmody, his brow squeezing out beads of perspiration. "We'd better go to my office and talk."

"You don't have any office," snapped Baldwin, thoroughly angry now. "You're through, Carmody! I don't care if you *are* my cousin!"

"Come on," said the Commander

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wearily, taking his arm. "Let's go talk it over. If I'm crazy I'll admit it."

SOMEWHAT calmed, Baldwin followed the other through the door. The corridor led to a promenade which faced the main waiting room of the Station. The place had an air of vastness Baldwin had always liked. The iridescent sky was painted on metal, and the trees and buildings hid strengthening beams and stanchions, but the illusion of planetary conditions was good.

There was excitement on the floor, an unnatural flux. People who should have been hurrying about were gathered in small knots, talking and gesticulating. Others swarmed around the information enclosure, jostling and squeezing. Baldwin was bursting with impatience by the time they reached the Commander's offce.

"All right, Carmody. I want to know what this is all about. You've still got a chance if you can talk fast—"

"Wait, before you say anything more," the Commander interrupted. There was a note of pleading in his voice. "Something's happened. An accident. You *are* Baldwin, aren't you?"

"You know I am!"

"All right, I believe you. *But so was the other one!*"

"Other one?"

"You just came from Centauri, didn't you? On the six-twenty?"

"You should know! You had me moved off the ship!"

Carmody took a deep breath, obviously stalling for time.

"I'll give it to you the way I see it," he said finally. "The six-twenty came in the *first* time more than four hours ago. You were on board *that* ship too."

Baldwin sank into a chair, his mind cold, clear, and racing. He thought of several possible explanations for Carmody's statement, and discarded them one by one. The only answer that made any sense was that the Commander was crazy.

"I know how it sounds," said Carmody sullenly. "I know what you're thinking. But I tell you there *was* another six-twenty, and you *were* on it. I shook your hand. I put you on the shuttle boat. I watched it take off and head for Earth."

Baldwin jumped to his feet and slammed the palm of his hand on Carmody's desk, hard. "I don't know what you're trying to pull. But I think I'll fire you just for not being able to think of a better story!"

"Something happened in the Ultrabeam," insisted Carmody, jabbing at an intercom button. "I'm having my technicians look into it now."

"But there was no other ship! Why don't you check with the Centauri Station?"

"I'm checking," said Carmody wearily, punching the intercom again. "You know it takes two days to get an answer back. All we know is *two* ships came in and *you* were on the second one."

THE intercom was still silent, but a small, thin man came running into the room. On seeing Baldwin he came to an abrupt halt, jaw hanging.

"Well, Nelson" snapped Carmody.

"She's the six-twenty all right, Chief," the man said excitedly. "We compared her with the first one, and they're like two castings from the same mold. Even the same specks of dust!"

"But where in blazes did the second one come from?" demanded Carmody.

"There's been some uneasiness about Proxima Centauri moving too close to our transmission line. You know how the Ultrabeam's unstable in a strong gravity field—that's why the Stations are built so far out—"

"Tell me, man—what happened?" bellowed Carmody, banging the desk with his fist.

"We think Proxima's field split the beam in two! Something like a double-refracting crystal splits ordinary light.

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Lucky for us one phase lagged the other one by four hours, or there would have been one helluva bang in the receivers!"

"Are you trying to tell me the second ship came out of *nothing?*"

"The mass-energy must have come from Proxima herself. It's been a known theoretical possibility . . ."

Baldwin listened to the discourse in stunned silence. Disbelief gave way to a growing horror. His personal advisers had assured him Proxima would not disturb the beam. If this accident had actually happened, heads would roll.

"Then there's no possibility of—of—a trick?" he heard Carmody say. "The ships are identical? You've checked on the—uh—doubles?"

"I'm having a pair of them sent here now," said the technician. "They're absolutely alike: fingerprints, cardiographs, cephalographs, credentials — everything."

Baldwin struggled between alternatives of disbelief and fear. He sat without saying a word or moving a muscle until a guard ushered in two men.

They were like two prints from the same negative, with the identical expressions of terror on their well-fed faces. Their lower lips trembled in the same way, and they were nervously wringing their pudgy hands. They didn't seem to want to look at one another.

Baldwin was conscious of his own dry-throated voice saying, "I'm T. J. Baldwin. There's been an accident."

"I—I've been told," said the two simultaneously. "I'd like to get home as soon as possible, sir. My wife—"

The two mouths stopped moving at the same instant. The two faces turned to one another and blanched.

Baldwin buried his head in his hands and shuddered.

"Take them away . . . Take them away," he moaned.

After the two had gone, there was silence in the office. For a full five minutes Baldwin could hear only the rasp of his own breathing. Little by little the conviction of truth settled down on him. Then there must be another T. J. Baldwin, another *he*, out there in space somewhere. That other one was going home.

"What do you think I should do, Mr. Baldwin?" asked Carmody finally.

"Get me a ship," said Baldwin wearily. "I want to go home."

THE office building looked as though Baldwin Transstellar were trying to reach the stairs by piling concrete on steel. As Baldwin stared down the two-thousand-foot side of it from the window of the landing airtaxi, he felt jumpy and nervous, strangely unsure of himself.

His office was on the top floor and had a private entrance. He walked over to it on buttery knees, feeling somehow like an intruder as he entered the thick-carpeted corridor. The relief he'd needed and expected didn't come. His nerves cried for release, and yet every step wound him tighter and tighter.

The massive door of his office was locked. Baldwin placed a trembling hand on the scanner key and the door opened softly. The man sitting behind the desk looked up, startled.

That man was T. J. Baldwin.

The shock was somehow even deeper than Baldwin had expected. Up to then, he hadn't really believed that another *he* existed. He would have been relieved to find out he'd been tricked, no matter what the subterfuge implied. But here before him sat the objective reality—his own mirror image, solid as life. His mind tried to believe his senses . . .

They looked at each other for a minute in silence, studying each other's features in an agony of interest.

"Glad to see you," said the man behind the desk finally. "Sit down."

Why didn't I say that? Why don't this man and I talk together like those

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doubled idiots back at the Station?

The observation gave him comfort. Complete and absolute duplication of identity was a horrible thing. Perhaps, after all, there was a difference.

"I suppose we should call each other something," said the man behind the desk. "How about 'Number One' and 'Number Two'?"

"You are 'Number One', I presume," said Baldwin.

The other shrugged with an exaggerated indifference that somewhat irritated. The desk intercom chose that moment to tinkle discreetly. "Mr. Armbruster would like to see you, sir," said the voice of a secretary.

The man behind the desk made a gesture, and after a moment the tall, lanky head of Transstellar's Legal Department stalked in. On seeing the two Baldwins he stopped in mid-stride.

"Do your gawking later," said Number One acidly. "I want to know how Transstellar stands on this thing."

Armbruster's jaw closed with a snap. His face had paled at first; now it colored. His eyes darted from one to the other, resting finally on the man behind the desk.

"Not well," he said. "We're responsible—there's no way out of that. The only question is, how much will it cost? I'm having my men run the data into our legal analyzer now, to get a prediction."

"But can the other passengers sue?" insisted Number One. "The originals haven't been harmed in any way—I should know that! Do the—uh—duplicates have any legal rights? Are they actually *people?*"

Baldwin jumped up from his chair. Crystal clear, he knew the thought behind that question.

"There'll be no discrimination against the duplicates!"

"That's right," said Armbruster, his eyes shifting rapidly. "I've already got a partial result from our analyzer, and the prediction is that the doubles will have equal rights."

"Then we're in trouble," said Number One grimly.

"Yes," agreed the lawyer. "There will be questions of property rights, legal responsibilities—of identity itself."

"Then we've got to settle with every one of them," said Baldwin. "Out of court, and fast! Before they start really feeling their losses."

"You're working on them?" said Number One.

"Yes," said the lawyer. "But it's no use having them sign anything till their legal status is established. The Supreme Analyzer in Washington should come through with a decision sometime today."

"Then get the machinery moving!" snapped Number One. "Soon as the Supreme Analyzer's decision comes in, report directly to me."

AFTER Armbruster had gone, Baldwin spent five minutes carefully avoiding the eyes of Number One. He felt sick, collapsed inside. For the first time, he was on the outside looking in. Another man had taken over his life.

A chair squeaked. Number One had turned to stare out of the window, his face immobile in profile. It was the face of a stranger. Baldwin tried, but could not think of it as his own. An oppressive tension filled the room like a stifling mist.

"Have you seen Lily?" asked Baldwin finally.

"I called her up. I told her it was a hoax and she shouldn't pay attention to any rumors. She said, 'Golly, that makes me a bigamist, doesn't it?'"

Just like Lily, thought Baldwin . . . *Sometimes she doesn't think deeply.* He ached for her, all over. He wanted to put his head on her shoulder and have her stroke his hair.

"She must know it's true by now," he said. "Shouldn't one of us go see her?"

Number One leaned back and closed his eyes. Baldwin knew what he was

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thinking. *They* had a wife of only three months — young and pretty, but only one!

"How about you?" said Number One, bringing the tips of his fingers together slowly. "Why don't you go over? I can stay here at the office and handle things."

Baldwin laughed a hard, bitter laugh like the bark of a dog. He understood perfectly. A wife was only a wife, but this office was the control center of Baldwin Transstellar — the throne room of an empire! It was not an even trade!

"No," he said coldly. "We'll stay together until the legal mess is straightened out."

"As you wish," said Number One. "Armbruster should be coming through with a complete prediction any minute. Then we'll know what to expect."

"You realize," said Baldwin carefully, "that any decision of the Supreme Analyzer applies also to *us*."

"Of course. But we can work that out later."

At that moment Armbruster came in. His thin face wore a look of relief.

"It's what we wanted — what we had to have," he exulted.

"Well?" snapped Baldwin, feeling irritation when he realized Number One had spoken the same word, perfectly synchronized.

"*Both* of the doubles will be non-legal entities as far as possible, until some means of permanently telling them apart is established. There'll be a time-limit, of course — maybe a couple of days."

"What happens after the time-limit?" asked Number One.

"Nothing, if the doubles get together before then and get themselves legally identified. They'll have to agree on some division of assets and responsibilities, of course."

"And if they don't?" prompted Baldwin.

"They'll be identified somehow and declared separate legal entities. They'll be able to sue one another — and us!"

"After only two days!" cried Number One, jumping up. "Armbruster, you're an idiot! That isn't enough time to reach any agreements!"

"I can't dictate to the Analyzer," said Armbruster wearily. "I can only ask for a ruling. Besides, nothing can be done until the doubles can be legally told apart. That time-limit may be the thing that will save us."

"How?"

"This whole thing has to go through fast! If just one of those doubles realizes the power he has over us, before we get him bought off, we're in real trouble."

"What power, Armbruster?" prompted Baldwin.

"Well —" the lawyer had the manner of a man walking on blistered feet. "Every one of the passengers had suffered a very personal loss due to the accident. A loss of *identity*. If one of them enters a suit against us on that angle, I think the Analyzer will throw the case to a human court. I entered the data in our own analyzer, and the decision was 'indeterminate'."

"Indeterminate!"

Armbruster nodded, his face pale. "You know what that means."

Baldwin knew, and the knowledge made him ill. There was a deep-running popular feeling that the Ultrabeam Transport system should belong to the public. Any one of the forty-two possible lawsuits, if thrown to a human court, could break the company!

"All right, we'll settle," said Number One grimly.

"How much can I offer?"

"Up to a million apiece," said Number One. "If that fails, there are other measures."

"Other measures," echoed Baldwin softly.

LILY'S voice over the phone was just as he remembered it.

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"*Both* of you are coming home?" she said, a faint edge perceptible in the sugar of her voice. "That'll be just *twice* as nice, won't it?"

"Yes, darling," said Baldwin. "I wanted to prepare you for the shock. It *is* quite a shock, believe me. But the three of us have to get together before—"

"Before we become laughing stocks, that's what!" cried Lily, and now the edge was definitely there, cutting freely. "A million people have been here today, and they're all laughing at me—at us—"

"There, there," soothed Baldwin. "After all, it isn't as though you'd lost me, is it?"

"*Lost* you! I don't care if—"

"Darling, I haven't time to talk now," Baldwin cut in. "I'll see you in a half an hour."

The phone clicked dead. Baldwin kept his face expressionless, because Number One was looking at him.

"What did she say?"

"She's mad. You know Lily."

Darkness had fallen by the time they took off in the sleek, chauffeur-driven aircar. As Baldwin watched the shifting, varicolored lights of the city fade in the distance, he felt utterly homeless and lonely. The half-hour ride home was a period of strained silence, with each man sunk deep in his own thoughts.

Lily was waiting at the door, dressed in a sheer, revealing gown with diamond glitters. She'd been crying, though her eyes were dry now.

"No—oh, no!" she gasped as she saw them.

Her eyes dilated, then closed, and she swayed on her feet. Baldwin felt an impulse to go to her, to comfort her and whisper something reassuring into her ear. But he was an instant too late, because Number One was there exactly as he would have been. The sight of the two together staggered him. It occurred to him that little by little the other was moving into sole possession of their common identity.

Where would it stop?

If he were no longer T. J. Baldwin, *who* would he be? His mind would not support such a hypothesis, even for an instant. He *was* T. J. Baldwin; he always had been and always would be. Number One was the intruder, the unknown.

He looked on coldly as Lily sobbed tearlessly on the shoulder of Number One. They looked ridiculous together, somehow—an old rake with a young chorus-girl wife that he'd bought. An expensive, jeweled thing. He wondered if she were really crying, or just acting as she sometimes did.

"Break it up!" he said harshly.

They looked up at him as at a stranger. But Baldwin looked only at Lily. There was no sympathy for him in her face, only confusion and fear for herself. And disbelief. Her limited imagination could not cope with the facts.

"I forgot you hadn't met," said Number One banally. "Lily, I want you to meet your other husband."

A tremendous weariness weighed down on Baldwin. He felt the shriveling up of something within him. He no longer desired anything but a lonely place and sleep.

"All right," he said finally. "Make fools of yourselves if you want to. I'm going to bed."

BALDWIN awoke, not knowing exactly where. He was in bed in a large room equipped with every comfort. After awhile he recognized it as a guest room in his own house.

A hasty glance at the ceiling clock told him he'd slept late. A double dose of sedative had given him a night of troubled sleep, punctuated by nightmares.

He was an unwanted guest in his own house. Another man had occupied his bed.

The thought hammered at him until he forced it into the background by a sheer effort of will. Listlessly he dialed

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breakfast on the robot waiter, then sat back against the pillows to think. After a completely wasted half hour, he picked up the phone and got a private connection with Armbruster.

"I meant to call you," said the lawyer in a low voice. "Have you heard it on the videos?"

"Heard what?"

"The Supreme Analyzer's decision! Our prediction was close."

"Hm-m—so there's a time-limit on the identification?"

"It's shorter than we expected. The deadline for the voluntary action is midnight tonight!"

"Tonight! Will that be enough time?"

"I've got half the passengers ready to sign off now. We're doubling their assets before the accident and adding a hundred thousand bonus. The others should come around."

"How about my—uh—the other one? Is he there at the office now?"

"Yes, sir," said Armbruster, almost in a whisper.

"Is it true that neither of us can make a move, legally?"

"As far as the law is concerned, you two don't exist until midnight tonight. You're supposed to report to the local court for identification—"

"Then we have to work through proxies of the Company? Through *you*, Armbruster?"

"Yes, sir—until—"

"All right, then. Permit *no* action on the part of the other one. Understand? Settle with the other passengers as soon as you can, but accept no orders from *him*."

Armbruster made a choking sound. Immediately afterward, Baldwin heard the faint tinkle of an intercom at the other end, and hung up. At that moment he felt almost as sorry for Armbruster as for himself.

He leaned back against the pillows, closed his eyes and tried to think.

Should he go to the office, meet Number One, and report for legal separation of identity? No. That seemed wrong, somehow. It didn't solve anything.

Should he go downstairs and see Lily? A coldness settled over him at the thought. He felt a complete lack of desire for her.

Why leave the room at all, then? In it he was safe and self-sufficient for the time being. And he needed rest. He could lock the door from his bedside; no one could disturb him . . . Somewhat calmed by this thought, he rolled over and tried to sleep again.

BUT sleep would not come . . . Midnight tonight, Armbruster had said . . . It was easy to see why the time had been made so short: there was no enforcible human law that covered absolutely identical persons; therefore the separation of the doubles had to be effected immediately. Baldwin saw the justice of it in every case except his own—after all, wasn't Transtellar making good the losses of the others?

Almost on a subconscious level his thoughts worked toward a disturbing but inevitable conclusion . . . Transtellar was compensating the other victims of the accident by doubling their assets.

But *he* was Transtellar. Who would compensate *him?*

With a grim certainty Baldwin knew that joint-ownership of the Company with his double was impossible. There was no such thing as accepting the loss of one's possessions, the setback of all one's life's aims, without a struggle. The only acceptable solution was winner take all.

Yet, how could he possibly win? By what trick, legal or otherwise, could he obtain undisputed possession of his own property, a right to live his own life? In this game the loser would always have a countermove, for *he would then be the victim of uncompensated losses and could sue!* It was an insoluble stalemate, unless—

He was suddenly wide awake, shivering. A very disturbing possibility be-

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gan to eat its way into his brain. An unpleasant thought, involving a nauseating self-revelation. His mind recoiled at it, but he couldn't ignore it.

He looked about the room with new eyes now. It was still a refuge, but not an impregnable one. The window faced open air; a locked door could be forced . . . Hurriedly he got up and started dressing.

The house was silent, and he met no one on his way to the basement level. This was the crucial step. If he were first, if he hadn't been anticipated, he had a good chance!

The door of the gun-room opened silently under his hand, revealing the rows of sleek hunting rifles he'd saved from younger days. Neatly stacked on the shelves were sealed cases of ammunition.

He closed the door and started breaking the guns, trying to make as little noise as possible. When the once-treasured weapons were twisted and scattered, he took the one he'd set aside and filled its magazine with clean, oily-smelling cartridges. Only then did the frantic haste of his motions abate.

So far the odds were with him!

His exultation was short-lived when he realized that Number One would *know* he'd do this . . . It was like a problem in infinite regresses, like the diminishing images in a hall of mirrors. Each of them could guess the other's probable course of action, and could modify his own plans accordingly. The main question was, where to stop modifying and when to act?

BACK in the locked sanctuary of the guest room, he put the gun within easy reach and sat down to wait. The inaction went against his nature. But the first move had to come from outside—the cards were laid out that way.

He felt safer now, able to think more clearly . . . He'd always been able to solve his problems with cold, ruthless logic. It had been his ruthlessness as much as his skill at financial manipulations that had enabled him to run a small inherited fortune up to a controlling interest in the Transtellar Corporation . . . All that seemed long ago and far away now.

But it explained why he, T. J. Baldwin, was sitting here in a locked room with a loaded gun!

Daylight deepened into dusk, and still he waited. His head ached with a pounding agony; his stomach howled its hunger—for food that he could obtain at the touch of a button, but which he didn't dare eat! A hundred times he regretted having decided to wait, but it was the only course left to him now . . .

At seven-thirty Lily called him. She sounded frightened.

"What are you doing up there?"

"Who told you to ask?"

"He—he hasn't come home yet. I can't reach him at the office. I—"

"You can tell him I'm going out now!" said Baldwin harshly, and hung up.

Was it a trick? Had someone put her up to calling him, to make sure he was there?

He was certain of only one thing: he had to get out of that room!

Cold sweat beaded on his forehead, and the heavy gun stuck clammily to his palms as he opened the door. The hallway was brightly lighted and empty. It took all the strength he could muster in his legs to advance into it. There were four other rooms opening onto the hall, and an elevator as well as two staircases. Baldwin found the switch that darkened the corridor, then went soundlessly to a window at one end. He leaned against the cold glass, shivering.

The sky was overcast, reflecting redly the lights of the city in the distance. Air traffic moved like swirls of sparks as commuters drove homeward from the city. On the shadowy lawn below, nothing moved.

Ten-thirty! The luminous dial of

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Baldwin's watch stared mockingly at him in the darkness. Why was nothing happening? The inaction was sapping his strength, leaving him helpless. Yet he had to wait. The other *must* know that midnight was too late for both of them . . .

It was past eleven when he heard the sound, a soft rushing as of bat wings beating in the darkness. An aircar!

THERE were no lights, but the sound came nearer from above and faded out on the other side of the house. Cursing himself for a fool, Baldwin ran to the window at the other end of the corridor. There he could see the metallic gleam of the car on the lawn below, but nothing else. He fought back an impulse to fire blindly into the shadows.

What now? He'd been outguessed once—he should have known the aircar wouldn't come in the usual way. A dozen ways in which he could be trapped suddenly occurred to him.

The decision to act gave him new strength. His mind worked rapidly, trying to probe the end of the infinite regress, to anticipate the next move . . .

He was halfway down a service stairway, moving cautiously in the pitch darkness, when he heard the gentle opening and closing of a door below him.

He stood frozen to the spot, making no sound. The man at the bottom of the stair had a gun. There was no doubting the identity of their conclusions now. The same mental process had brought them to the same spot in time and space.

Only, this time he was first!

Tensely he waited. The darkness was impenetrable, but the cautious footsteps came nearer . . . He could almost feel the warmth of the other's body when he fired.

The flash of the gun disclosed the other's startled face; the gunsound was like a snarl of rage. Baldwin held the trigger back for continuous firing until the figure before him melted away. He followed its clumping progress down the stairs, firing until the gun was empty.

He stood reeling for awhile in the darkness. Then, somehow, his hand found the light switch, and the soft, opalescent glow came on without a sound.

A trail of blood on the stair led his eyes to a crumpled figure at the bottom. Already the body was cooling in death, the open-eyed face staring upward . . .

Baldwin's face.

For an interminable time he stood there. Something inside him twisted and writhed and finally solidified; and then he began to cringe.

It was his *own* face in death . . . That pitiful heap at the bottom of the stair was *he*.

What his mind had refused to believe while the other was an active enemy to be fought, it now accepted in a flood. The brain behind that death-mask had carried *his* ideas, *his* aspirations. His own life, too, could end like this and would look like this to an outsider.

His heart pounded against his ribs as if trying to add its contents to the widening pool at his feet. With a superhuman effort he tore himself loose from the incredible fascination of the thing on the floor. He was only vaguely conscious of other people about, of screams . . . He ran out onto the cool grass of the lawn, stumbled and fell, and didn't have the strength to rise again.

Sometime later the police found him there, talking to himself in the darkness.

"COLD-BLOODED murder!" the voice boomed. "This man so hated and feared his own motives that he committed murder rather than face himself! Was ever a crime so clearly premeditated — so deserving of punishment?"

Baldwin woke with a start, and knew

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he had been dreaming again. His body was stiff, the bedclothes soaked with perspiration.

He was in his own bed again. The doctors had told him he was all right. Lily had cried over him and stroked his hair, sobbing, "Poor dear, poor dear." Even the police guard outside his door had oozed unctuous respect.

There was no doubt about it: he was once more the one and only T. J. Baldwin.

He pronounced the name to himself with a spasm of self-loathing. If only he could be rid of the nightmare! The accusing voice that spoke out of a dead face that was like his own . . .

Fighting an overwhelming weariness, he rolled over in bed and pushed the buzzer. Armbruster came in almost immediately; he had been waiting outside the door for over an hour.

"Well?" snapped Baldwin.

"I couldn't do anything," said the pale-faced lawyer. "You're going to be indicted for murder!"

"But the time-limit wasn't up! You said that legally the two of us didn't exist—"

"Unless certain measures were taken," Armbruster said wearily. "Well, he took them . . . He went and got himself identified!"

BALDWIN closed his eyes. Of course! That was what he would have done in the other's place, if he had thought of it . . . Suddenly he could see how it had happened.

"You talked him into it, Armbruster."

"I told you, too—"

"All right," said Baldwin, sighing almost with relief at his decision. "Go away."

"But we have to—"

"Get out!"

After Armbruster had gone, he pushed the button that locked the door. He swallowed the sedative tablets one by one until he lost count. His last thought was an almost vengeful sense of justice.

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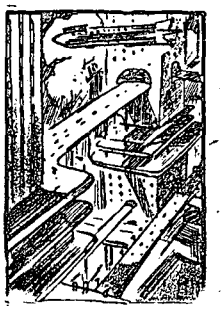

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Welcome to Luna

By CHARLES E. FRITCH

He'd reach the Moon . . . or die trying

FOR AS LONG as he could remember, Mack Everts had desired but one thing in life. He had wanted it more than anything else, and it became an obsession with him.

"And now it's become a reality," he breathed.

He looked at the moon in the forward viewscreen; it was clear and crystal bright, like a silver quarter on black velvet.

The man in the moon looked back at him. They smiled.

"We're going to be great friends, you and I," Mack said to it. "Great friends."

Beneath his feet the metal floor of the rocket vibrated, quivering with the monotonous pulsing of the atomic engines that were now thrusting him across the brief interval between Earth and her satellite.

The viewscreen hazed as moisture crept into Mack Everts' eyes, and the silver quarter shimmered as if immersed in a pool of glittering water.

"I'm going to the moon," he whispered into the artificial atmosphere of the cabin. "The first man to go to the moon."

It had been a long, hard struggle, full of disheartening setbacks, of friends who did not understand and enemies who did. All his life he'd had to battle the physical difficulties—the long hours spent working so he could study, the long hours studying so he could learn, the sweating and the toiling trying to get material, and then the sweating and the toiling to put the material together. He didn't mind that so much; it was something you could get your teeth into, something you could battle with tooth and nail, slide rule and blueprint. But the ridicule, the jests made in "innocent" fun by otherwise well-meaning persons—that was something else.

For as long as he could remember, Mack Everts had wanted to go to the moon; and for as long as he could remember, he had been ridiculed and made fun of. But now—now he'd show them.

The moon was slowly filling the viewscreen with its bulk, and Mack Everts' mind filled itself with indescribable exhiliaration. The soft thrum of the engines raced the rapid beating of his heart.

It was strange, he thought, that people still viewed space travel as some-

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thing more suitable to fiction than reality, even in the year 1988. Probably the government's expensive failures had something to do with that. Even now, their only accomplishment was sending unmanned rockets to the moon, trying to brake their fall by remote control, and failing. There were many volunteers, of course, but public opinion was against the project as it was, and if another manned rocket knocked holes in both the moon and the crew, that would be the end.

Maybe in a few years the government's experiments would be complete, and rocket travel would be considered safe enough to include a human being. The time was swiftly growing ripe for it.

Meanwhile, Mack Everts wasn't waiting.

For the hundredth time he went about the small cabin, his magnetized heels clanking softly against the metal floor. It was a small rocket—he'd had no use for a large one—but large enough to amaze even him that he alone could have built it. With the help of friends, it could have been completed much sooner; but friends gave unwelcome advice and had no desire to waste precious time in such a ridiculous task as building a moon rocket.

So he'd done it himself. All of it. He had drawn the plans and charted the trajectory.

Every single rivet he had personally placed there.

It took a long time in the doing, but he had done it.

Yes, it *had* taken a long time. Thirty-seven years of a thirty-eight year life. For even in his cradle he had reached for that shiny something that lingered just beyond grasp, and was surprised and angry that he could not pluck it from the air like a circus balloon on a string.

It is true that many children reach for the moon; but Mack Everts did not outgrow the desire.

EVEN now, as it grew large and full before him, as face markings became light and shadow rimming deep craters and empty seas—even now, he wanted to reach out and hold it in his hands, gently as though it were a large, scarred soap bubble.

He had often lain on cool grass during warm summer evenings and watched the moon climb hand over hand across the diamond-set heavens and dreamed he was out in space beside it, drifting weightlessly, feeling the soft murmur of stars about him.

"Someday," he'd said, "I'm going up there. To the moon."

In 1960, when he was ten years old, he made this announcement to a close circle of friends. They laughed at him, derided him, for derision was then the style. A space rocket bearing three Air Force personnel had just exploded for no discernible reason upon reaching the moon's surface, and the public was indignant. After that, the project dropped from the limelight almost to obscurity, and further appropriations were inadequate even for test rockets.

The children had danced around him, singing:

"Mackie Everts went to the moon,
"Mackie Everts fell very soon . . ."

Sullenly he'd turned away, hands in pockets. "I'll show you," he muttered, hurt and angry. "I'll show all of you."

Behind him, their derisive cries came:

". . . And all the king's horses
"And all the king's men
"Couldn't put Mackie together again!"

With the sound of their rhyme haunting him he returned to his work.

As the rocket went through space, Mack Everts thought about those children and of the hard-headed mundane individuals they'd grown up to be, people with two feet and a granite head firmly and immovably wedded to equally solid ground, persons with thoughts going no further than their noses. He thought about them and turned each of their names over on his lips, as though

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tasting the sound it made. They wanted to be shown, did they? Well, he was showing them now!

IT HADN'T been easy, though. It hadn't been easy at all. For hardly a moment of his life had been spent in anything other than preparation for the time he would blast off for Luna. Even in pre-adolescence, he'd hurried from school to isolate himself in his room and study books on astronomy and physics and chemistry and mechanical design and a thousand other things he might need in preparation for this greatest of all adventures. Many long afternoons he would spend in the library poring over volumes of technical data, much of which he could at that time understand only dimly at best. While other children played, he studied, bending all efforts toward one final goal.

He'd gone through high school in two and a half years, with a number of credits far exceeding those necessary to graduate. His marks were low, sometimes barely passing, for all his learning was directed toward one dominant purpose, and he tried as best he could to ignore arbitrary educational requirements; he had enough to learn without bothering with superfluities.

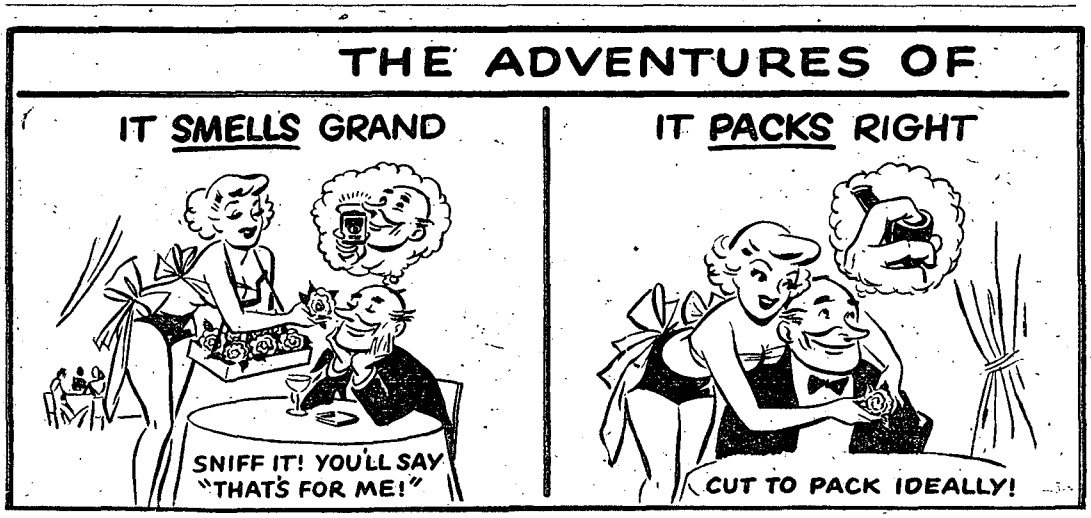
He went to college, taking courses without credit, desiring only the knowledge he could obtain from them. Layer upon layer of knowledge filled out the pattern he had set for himself, fusing itself into a larger, straighter arrow pointing toward the goal that dominated his life.

No, it hadn't been easy at all; but finally it had paid off, and Mack Everts was a rocket expert who could be compared favorably with anyone in the world.

"If you're so damned set on moon rockets," a friend said once, "why don't you get in on the government project?"

Mack shook his head, slowly but with infinite firmness. No, since their accident with the Air Force men, the government was sending only *unmanned* rockets to the moon. Besides that, this was *his* battle. It was a personal thing. He'd fought against tremendous odds alone, and now he would continue alone. He'd said he would be the first to set foot on the moon, and now he'd do it himself or die in the attempt. He, not the government, would be the new Columbus.

Mack Everts strapped himself into a soft-padded chair and with glad eyes watched the moon hurtling to meet him. His fingers ran certainly over the controls. The rocket ship decelerated,



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and conflicting forces pulled him into the seat. It wouldn't be long now. Minutes. Only minutes, and then seconds, and then parts of seconds. . . .

During those last few minutes, Mack Everts became a machine, precise and without emotion. Neurons clicked noiselessly, giving silent directions, and hands obeyed, quickly, mechanically, without hesitation.

The rocket settled on a long tail of orange flame . . .

Suddenly it was over, and silence crept forward.

For a long moment, he sat very still. Then the tension burst suddenly from him like a released spring, and he wanted to laugh and shout and cry all at once.

"The moon," he shouted ecstatically. "I'm on the moon! I made it. The first man on the moon!"

He dragged a reconverted diving suit from a wall and eagerly pulled himself into it. He opened the door, and oxygen swept from the small cabin, stirring up yellow-grey dust that fell slowly.

Mack Everts stepped forward like a man in a dream, his heart hammering within him.

"Mackie Everts went to the moon,

"Mackie Everts fell very soon. . . ."

His fist clenched. He'd show them. He'd show them all. He strode onto the cold, hard surface of the satellite, crumbling ageless rocks beneath his boots. He felt light and airy, and his gaze swept chalky cliffs and crags and pits as though he owned them personally. It was quiet, lifeless, like a tomb. Overhead, stars shone like fire.

". . . And all the king's horses. . . ."

Mack fell to his knees. "Here, in the sight of God and the Universe, I claim this satellite, Luna. . . ."

". . . and all the king's men. . . ."

Jubilantly, Mack got to his feet and turned back to the rocket

". . . couldn't put Mackie. . . ."

He stared, his features contorting in disbelief.

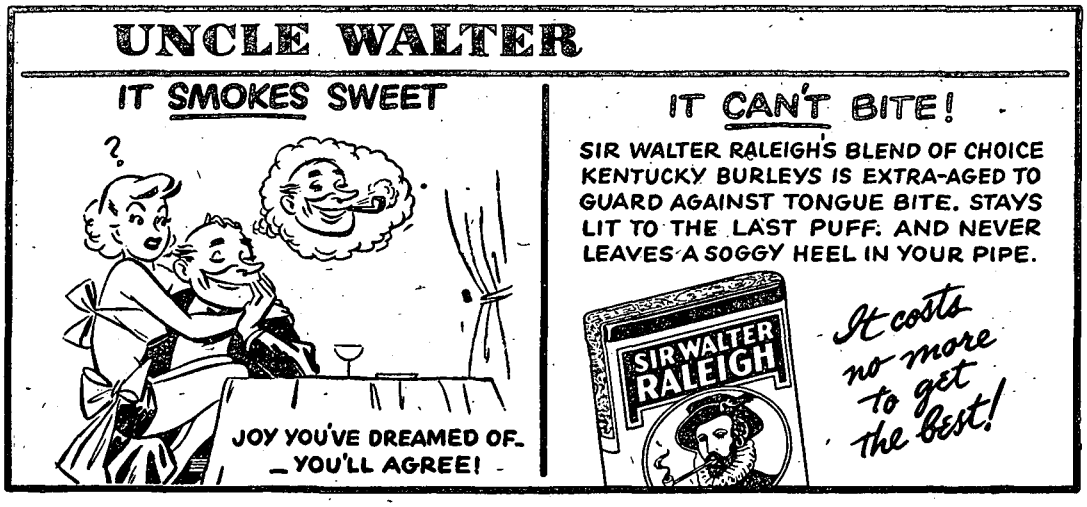
The rocket ship was smashed, wrecked, a hopeless tangle of steel and glass and wire and bones and flesh and blood. Behind it was the long furrow it had plowed into the moon's surface.

For a long time Mack Everts stared at it, not understanding; and then over the crest of a hill came a crowd of people, their whispers crying into the airless silence.

In the lead were three men in tattered Air Force uniforms, their faces grave and welcoming.

Mack began to cry.

Overhead, the Earth looked down, uncomprehending. ● ● ●


UNCLE WALTER
IT SMOKES SWEET
JOY YOU'VE DREAMED OF— YOU'LL AGREE!
IT CAN'T BITE!
SIR WALTER RALEIGH'S BLEND OF CHOICE KENTUCKY BURLEYS IS EXTRA-AGED TO GUARD AGAINST TONGUE BITE. STAYS LIT TO THE LAST PUFF. AND NEVER LEAVES A SOGGY HEEL IN YOUR PIPE.
SIR WALTER RALEIGH
It costs no more to get the best!

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a novelet by LEIGH BRACKETT

I

HE CAME alone into the wine-shop, wrapped in a dark red cloak, with the cowl drawn over his head. He stood for a moment by the doorway and one of the slim dark predatory women who live in those places went to him, with a silvery chiming from the little bells that were almost all she wore.

I saw her smile up at him. And then, suddenly, the smile became fixed and something happened to her eyes. She was no longer looking at the cloaked man, but through him. In the oddest fashion—it was as though he had become invisible.

She went by him. Whether she passed some word along or not I couldn't tell but an empty space widened around the stranger. And no one looked at him. They did not avoid looking at him. They simply refused to see him.

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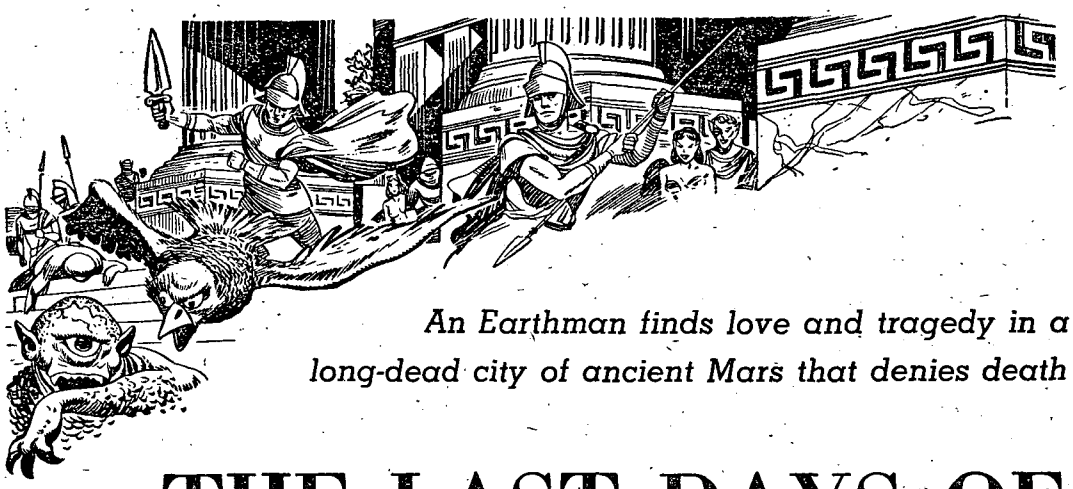

An Earthman finds love and tragedy in a long-dead city of ancient Mars that denies death

THE LAST DAYS OF Shandakor

He began to walk slowly across the crowded room. He was very tall and he moved with a fluid, powerful grace that was beautiful to watch. People drifted out of his way, not seeming to, but doing it. The air was thick with nameless smells, shrill with the laughter of women.

Two tall barbarians, far gone in wine, were carrying on some intertribal feud and the yelling crowd had made room for them to fight. There was a silver pipe and a drum and a double-banked harp making old wild music. Lithe brown bodies leaped and whirled through the laughter and the shouting and the smoke.

The stranger walked through all this, alone, untouched, unseen. He passed close to where I sat. Perhaps because I, of all the people in that place, not only saw him but stared at him, he gave me a glance of black eyes from under the shadow of his cowl—eyes like blown coals, bright with suffering and rage.

I caught only a glimpse of his muffled face. The merest glimpse—but that was enough. *Why did he have to show his face to me in that wine-shop in Barrakesh?*

He passed on. There was no space in the shadowy corner where he went but space was made, a circle of it, a moat between the stranger and the crowd. He sat down. I saw him lay a coin on the outer edge of the table. Presently a serving wench came up, picked up the coin and set down a cup of wine. But it was as if she waited on an empty table.

I turned to Kardak, my head drover, a Shunni with massive shoulders and uncut hair braided in an intricate tribal knot. "What's all that about?" I asked.

Kardak shrugged. "Who knows?" He started to rise. "Come, JonRoss, It is time we got back to the serai."

"We're not leaving for hours yet. And don't lie to me, I've been on Mars a long time. What is that man? Where does he come from?"

Barrakesh is the gateway between north and south. Long ago, when there

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were oceans in equatorial and southern Mars, when Valkis and Jekkara were proud seats of empire and not thieves' dens, here on the edge of the northern Drylands the great caravans had come and gone to Barrakesh for a thousand thousand years. It is a place of strangers.

In the time-eaten streets of rock you see tall Keshi hillmen, nomads from the high plains of Upper Shun, lean dark men from the south who barter away the loot of forgotten tombs and temples, cosmopolitan sophisticates up from Kahora and the trade cities, where there are spaceports and all the appurtenances of modern civilization.

The red-cloaked stranger was none of these.

A GLIMPSE of a face— I am a planetary anthropologist. I was supposed to be charting Martian ethnology and I was doing it on a fellowship grant I had wangled from a Terran university too ignorant to know that the vastness of Martian history makes such a project hopeless.

I was in Barrakesh, gathering an outfit preparatory to a year's study of the tribes of Upper Shun. And suddenly there had passed close by me a man with golden skin and un-Martian black eyes and a facial structure that belonged to no race I knew. I have seen the carven faces of fauns that were a little like it.

Kardak said again, "It is time to go, JonRoss!"

I looked at the stranger, drinking his wine in silence and alone. "Very well, *I'll* ask him."

Kardak sighed. "Earthmen," he said, "are not given much to wisdom." He turned and left me.

I crossed the room and stood beside the stranger. In the old courteous High Martian they speak in all the Low-Canal towns I asked permission to sit.

Those raging, suffering eyes met mine. There was hatred in them, and scorn, and shame. "What breed of human are you?"

"I am an Earthman."

He said the name over as though he had heard it before and was trying to remember. "Earthman. Then it is as the winds have said, blowing across the desert—that Mars is dead and men from other worlds defile her dust." He looked out over the wine-shop and all the people who would not admit his presence. "Change," he whispered. "Death and change and the passing away of things."

The muscles of his face drew tight. He drank and I could see now that he had been drinking for a long time, for days, perhaps for weeks. There was a quiet madness on him.

"Why do the people shun you?"

"Only a man of Earth would need to ask," he said and made a sound of laughter, very dry and bitter.

I was thinking, *A new race, an unknown race!* I was thinking of the fame that sometimes comes to men who discover a new thing, and of a Chair I might sit in at the University if I added one bright unheard-of piece of the shadowy mosaic of Martian history. I had had my share of wine and a bit more. That Chair looked a mile high and made of gold.

The stranger said softly, "I go from place to place in this wallow of Barrakesh and everywhere it is the same. I have ceased to be." His white teeth glittered for an instant in the shadow of the cowl. "They were wiser than I, my people. When Shandakor is dead, we are dead also, whether our bodies live or not."

"Shandakor?" I said. It had a sound of distant bells.

"How should an Earthman know? Yes, Shandakor! Ask of the men of Kesh and the men of Shun! Ask the kings of Mekh, who are half around the world! Ask of all the men of Mars—they have not forgotten Shandakor! But they will not tell you. It is a bitter shame to them, the memory and the name."

He stared out across the turbulent throng that filled the room and flowed

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over to the noisy street outside. "And I am here among them—lost."

"Shandakor is dead?"

"Dying. There were three of us who did not want to die. We came south across the desert—one turned back, one perished in the sand, I am here in Barrakesh." The metal of the wine-cup bent between his hands.

I said, "And you regret your coming."

"I should have stayed and died with Shandakor. I know that now. But I cannot go back."

"Why not?" *I was thinking how the name John Ross would look, inscribed in golden letters on the scroll of the discoverers.*

"The desert is wide, Earthman. Too wide for one alone."

And I said, "I have a caravan. I am going north tonight."

A light came into his eyes, so strange and deadly that I was afraid. "No," he whispered. *"No!"*

I sat in silence, looking out across the crowd that had forgotten me as well, because I sat with the stranger. *A new race, an unknown city. And I was drunk.*

After a long while the stranger asked me, "What does an Earthman want in Shandakor?"

I told him. He laughed. "You study men," he said and laughed again, so that the red cloak rippled.

"If you want to go back I'll take you. If you don't, tell me where the city lies and I'll find it. Your race, your city, should have their place in history."

He said nothing but the wine had made me very shrewd and I could guess at what was going on in the stranger's mind. I got up.

"Consider it," I told him. "You can find me at the serai by the northern gate until the lesser moon is up. Then I'll be gone."

"Wait." His fingers fastened on my wrist. They hurt. I looked into his face and I did not like what I saw there. But, as Kardak had mentioned, I was not given much to wisdom.

The stranger said, "Your men will not go beyond the Wells of Karthedon."

"Then we'll go without them."

A long long silence. Then he said, "So be it."

I knew what he was thinking as plainly as though he had spoken the words. He was thinking that I was only an Earthman and that he would kill me

Master Painter

SOME few decades ago an artist was only a man or woman who painted pictures. The word was not applied to sculptors, to poets, to composers, to actors, to authors. You painted pictures or you weren't an artist and that was that.

Fortunately the term was expanded to include anyone in any sort of work who does his job in artistic fashion—whether that work is juggling cigar boxes like the late W. C. Fields or stealing bases like Tyrus Raymond Cobb. And authors, since fiction-writing is today rated as an art, are generally awarded the term.

Most of the time they don't rate it—for the artist must convey feeling through the creation of an illusion that casts a tight web around the beholder and impels him into the mood the artist desires. It is a very special magic and only a very few authors have acquired its mastery.

Leigh Brackett is certainly one of them. She can cast a mood-net more unerringly than the most expert fisherman, can paint word-pictures that strike correspondingly vivid images in the mind and imagination of the reader. Using the same keyboards employed by less gifted authors she can evoke high tragedy, ecstasy, the sense and vision of unbearable beauty or decay or horror.

We have a hunch that this story finds her at her very best. There may be some who will say that it is not properly science fiction. To which, as in the case of Ray Bradbury, we can only counter, "Who cares?"

—THE EDITOR.

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when we came in sight of Shandakor.

II

THE caravan tracks branch off at the Wells of Karthedon. One goes westward into Shun and one goes north through the passes of Outer Kesh. But there is a third one, more ancient than the others. It goes toward the east and it is never used. The deep rock wells are dry and the stone-built shelters have vanished under the rolling dunes. It is not until the track begins to climb the mountains that there are even memories.

Kardak refused politely to go beyond the Wells. He would wait for me, he said, a certain length of time, and if I came back we would go on into Shun. If I didn't—well, his full pay was left in charge of the local headman. He would collect it and go home. He had not liked having the stranger with us. He had doubled his price.

In all that long march up from Barrakesh I had not been able to get a word out of Kardak or the men concerning Shandakor. The stranger had not spoken either. He had told me his name—Corin—and nothing more. Cloaked and cowled he rode alone and brooded. His private devils were still with him and he had a new one now—impatience. He would have ridden us all to death if I had let him.

So Corin and I went east alone from Karthedon, with two led animals and all the water we could carry. And now I could not hold him back.

"There is no time to stop," he said. "The days are running out. There is no time!"

When we reached the mountains we had only three animals left and when we crossed the first ridge we were afoot and leading the one remaining beast which carried the dwindling water skins.

We were following a road now. Partly hewn and partly worn it led up and over the mountains, those naked leaning mountains that were full of silence and peopled only with the shapes of red rock that the wind had carved.

"Armies used to come this way," said Corin. "Kings and caravans and beggars and human slaves, singers and dancing girls and the embassies of princes. This was the road to Shandakor."

And we went along it at a madman's pace.

The beast fell in a slide of rock and broke its neck and we carried the last water skin between us. It was not a heavy burden. It grew lighter and then was almost gone.

One afternoon, long before sunset, Corin said abruptly, "We will stop here."

The road went steeply up before us. There was nothing to be seen or heard. Corin sat down in the drifted dust. I crouched down too, a little distance from him. I watched him. His face was hidden and he did not speak.

The shadows thickened in that deep and narrow way. Overhead the strip of sky flared saffron and then red—and then the bright cruel stars came out. The wind worked at its cutting and polishing of stone, muttering to itself, an old and senile wind full of dissatisfaction and complaint. There was the dry faint click of falling pebbles.

The gun felt cold in my hand, covered with my cloak. I did not want to use it. But I did not want to die here on this silent pathway of vanished armies and caravans and kings.

A shaft of greenish moonlight crept down between the walls. Corin stood up.

"Twice now I have followed lies. Here I am met at last by truth."

I said, "I don't understand you."

"I thought I could escape the destruction. That was a lie. Then I thought I could return to share it. That too was a lie. Now I see the truth. Shandakor is dying. I fled from that dying, which is the end of the city and the end of my race. The shame of flight is on me and

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I can never go back."

"What will you do?"

"I will die here."

"And I?"

"Did you think," asked Corin softly, "that I would bring an alien creature in to watch the end of Shandakor?"

I MOVED first. I didn't know what weapons he might have, hidden under that dark red cloak. I threw myself over on the dusty rock. Something went past my head with a hiss and a rattle and a flame of light and then I cut the legs from under him and he fell down forward and I got on top of him, very fast.

He had vitality. I had to hit his head twice against the rock before I could take out of his hands the vicious little instrument of metal rods. I threw it far away. I could not feel any other weapons on him except a knife and I took that, too. Then I got up.

I said, "I will carry you to Shandakor."

He lay still, draped in the tumbled folds of his cloak. His breath made a harsh sighing in his throat. "So be it." And then he asked for water.

I went to where the skin lay and picked it up, thinking that there was perhaps a cupful left. I didn't hear him move. What he did was done very silently with a sharp-edged ornament. I brought him the water and it was already over. I tried to lift him up. His eyes looked at me with a curiously brilliant look. Then he whispered three words, in a language I didn't know, and died. I let him down again.

His blood had poured out across the dust. And even in the moonlight I could see that it was not the color of human blood.

I crouched there for a long while, overcome with a strange sickness. Then I reached out and pushed that red cowl back to bare his head. It was a beautiful head. I had never seen it. If I had, I would not have gone alone with Corin into the mountains. I would have understood many things if I had seen it and not for fame nor money would I have gone to Shandakor.

His skull was narrow and arched and the shaping of the bones was very fine. On that skull was a covering of short curling fibres that had an almost metallic luster in the moonlight, silvery and bright. They stirred under my hand, soft silken wires responding of themselves to an alien touch. And even as I took my hand away the luster faded from them and the texture changed.

When I touched them again they did not stir. Corin's ears were pointed and there were silvery tufts on the tips of them. On them and on his forearms and his breast were the faint, faint memories of scales, a powdering of shining dust across the golden skin. I looked at his teeth and they were not human either.

I knew now why Corin had laughed when I told him that I studied men.

It was very still. I could hear the falling of pebbles and the little stones that rolled all lonely down the cliffs and the shift and whisper of dust in the settling cracks. The Wells of Karthedon were far away. Too far by several lifetimes for one man on foot with a cup of water.

I looked at the road that went steep and narrow on ahead. I looked at Corin. The wind was cold and the shaft of moonlight was growing thin. I did not want to stay alone in the dark with Corin.

I rose and went on along the road that led to Shandakor.

It was a long climb but not a long way. The road came out between two pinnacles of rock. Below that gateway, far below in the light of the little low moons that pass so swiftly over Mars, there was a mountain valley.

Once around that valley there were great peaks crowned with snow and crags of black and crimson where the flying lizards nested, the hawk-lizards with the red eyes. Below the crags there were forests, purple and green and gold, and a black tarn deep on the valley floor. But when I saw it it was dead. The peaks had fallen away and

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the forests were gone and the tarn was only a pit in the naked rock.

In the midst of that desolation stood a fortress city.

There were lights in it, soft lights of many colors. The outer walls stood up, black and massive, a barrier against the creeping dust, and within them was an island of life. The high towers were not ruined. The lights burned among them and there was movement in the streets.

A LIVING city—and Corin had said that Shandakor was almost dead.

A rich and living city. I did not understand. But I knew one thing. Those who moved along the distant streets of Shandakor were not human.

I stood shivering in that windy pass. The bright towers of the city beckoned and there was something unnatural about all light life in the deathly valley. And then I thought that human or not the people of Shandakor might sell me water and a beast to carry it and I could get away out of these mountains, back to the Wells.

The road broadened, winding down the slope. I walked in the middle of it, not expecting anything. And suddenly two men came out of nowhere and barred the way.

I yelled. I jumped backward with my heart pounding and the sweat pouring off me. I saw their broadswords glitter in the moonlight. And they laughed.

They were human. One was a tall red barbarian from Mekh, which lay to the east half around Mars. The other was a leaner browner man from Taarak, which was farther still. I was scared and angry and astonished and I asked a foolish question.

"What are you doing *here*?"

"We wait," said the man of Taarak. He made a circle with his arm to take in all the darkling slopes around the valley. "From Kesh and Shun, from all the countries of the Norlands and the Marches men have come, to wait. And you?"

"I'm lost," I said. "I'm an Earthman and I have no quarrel with anyone." I was still shaking but now it was with relief. I would not have to go to Shandakor. If there was a barbarian army gathered here it must have supplies and I could deal with them.

I told them what I needed. "I can pay for them, pay well."

They looked at each other.

"Very well. Come and you can bargain with the chief."

They fell in on either side of me. We walked three paces and then I was on my face in the dirt and they were all over me like two great wildcats. When they were finished they had everything I owned except the few articles of clothing for which they had no use. I got up again, wiping the blood from my mouth.

"For an outlander," said the man of Mekh, "you fight well." He chinked my money-bag up and down in his palm, feeling the weight of it, and then he handed me the leather bottle that hung at his side. "Drink," he told me. "That much I can't deny you. But our water must be carried a long way across these mountains and we have none to waste on Earthmen."

I was not proud. I emptied his bottle for him. And the man of Taarak said, smiling, "Go on to Shandakor. Perhaps they will give you water."

"But you've taken all my money!"

"They are rich in Shandakor. They don't need money. Go ask them for water."

They stood there, laughing at some secret joke of their own, and I did not like the sound of it. I could have killed them both and danced on their bodies but they had left me nothing but my bare hands to fight with. So presently I turned and went on and left them grinning in the dark behind me.

The road led down and out across the plain. I could feel eyes watching me, the eyes of the sentinels on the rounding slopes, piercing the dim moonlight. The walls of the city began to rise higher and higher. They hid everything but the top of one tall tower that had a queer

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squat globe on top of it. Rods of crystal projected from the globe. It revolved slowly and the rods sparkled with a sort of white fire that was just on the edge of seeing.

A causeway lifted toward the Western Gate. I mounted it, going very slowly, not wanting to go at all. And now I could see that the gate was open. *Open*—and this was a city under siege!

I stood still for some time, trying to puzzle out what meaning this might have—an army that did not attack and a city with open gates. I could not find a meaning. There were soldiers on the walls but they were lounging at their ease under the bright banners. Beyond the gate many people moved about but they were intent on their own affairs. I could not hear their voices.

I crept closer, closer still. Nothing happened. The sentries did not challenge me and no one spoke.

You know how necessity can force a man against his judgment and against his will?

I entered Shandakor.

III

THERE was an open space beyond the gate, a square large enough to hold an army. Around its edges were the stalls of merchants. Their canopies were of rich woven stuffs and the wares they sold were such things as have not been seen on Mars for more centuries than men can remember.

There were fruits and rare furs, the long-lost dyes that never fade, furnishings carved from vanished woods. There were spices and wines and exquisite cloths. In one place a merchant from the far south offered a ceremonial rug woven from the long bright hair of virgins. And it was new.

These merchants were all human. The nationalities of some of them I knew. Others I could guess at from traditional accounts. Some were utterly unknown.

Of the throngs that moved about among the stalls, quite a number were human also. There were merchant princes come to barter and there were companies of slaves on their way to the auction block. But the others . . .

I stayed where I was, pressed into a shadowy corner by the gate, and the chill that was on me was not all from the night wind.

The golden-skinned silver-crested lords of Shandakor I knew well enough from Corin. I say lords because that is how they bore themselves, walking proudly in their own place, attended by human slaves. And the humans who were not slaves made way for them and were most deferential as though they knew that they were greatly favored to be allowed inside the city at all. The women of Shandakor were very beautiful, slim golden sprites with their bright eyes and pointed ears.

And there were others. Slender creatures with great wings, some who were lithe and furred, some who were hairless and ugly and moved with a sinuous gliding, some so strangely shaped and colored that I could not even guess at their possible evolution.

The lost races of Mars. The ancient races, of whose pride and power nothing was left but the half-forgotten tales of old men in the farthest corners of the planet. Even I, who had made the anthropological history of Mars my business, had never heard of them except as the distorted shapes of legend, as satyrs and giants used to be known on Earth.

Yet here they were in gorgeous trappings, served by naked humans whose fetters were made of precious metals. And before them too the merchants drew aside and bowed.

The lights burned, many-colored—not the torches and cressets of the Mars I knew but cool radiances that fell from crystal globes. The walls of the buildings that rose around the market place were faced with rare veined marbles and the fluted towers that crowned them were inlaid with turquoise and cinnabar, with amber and jade and the

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wonderful corals of the southern oceans.

The splendid robes and the naked bodies moved in a swirling pattern about the square. There was buying and selling and I could see the mouths of the people open and shut. The mouths of the women laughed. But in all that crowded place there was no sound. No voice, no scuff of sandal, no chink of mail. There was only silence, the utter stillness of deserted places.

I began to understand why there was no need to shut the gates. No superstitious barbarian would venture himself into a city peopled by living phantoms.

And I—I was civilized. I was, in my non-mechanical way, a scientist. And had I not been trapped by my need for water and supplies I would have run away right out of the valley. But I had no place to run to and so I stayed and sweated and gagged on the acrid taste of fear.

WHAT were these creatures that made no sound? Ghosts—images—dreams? The human and the non-human, the ancient, the proud, the lost and forgotten who were so insanely present—did they have some subtle form of life I knew nothing about? Could they see me as I saw them? Did they have thought and volition of their own?

It was the solidity of them, the intense and perfectly prosaic business in which they were engaged. Ghosts do not barter. They do not hang jeweled necklets upon their women nor argue about the price of a studded harness.

The solidity and the silence—that was the worst of it. If there had been one small living sound . . .

A dying city, Corin had said. *The days are running out.* What if they had run out? What if I were here in this massive pile of stone with all its countless rooms and streets and galleries and hidden ways, alone with the lights and the soundless phantoms?

Pure terror is a nasty thing. I had it then.

I began to move, very cautiously, along the wall. I wanted to get away from that market place. One of the hairless gliding non-humans was bartering for a female slave. The girl was shrieking. I could see every drawn muscle in her face, the spasmodic working of her throat. Not the faintest sound came out.

I found a street that paralleled the wall. I went along it, catching glimpses of people—human people—inside the lighted buildings. Now and then men passed me and I hid from them. There was still no sound. I was careful how I set my feet. Somehow I had the idea that if I made a noise something terrible would happen.

A group of merchants came toward me. I stepped back into an archway and suddenly from behind me there came three spangled women of the serais. I was caught.

I did not want those silent laughing women to touch me. I leaped back toward the street and the merchants paused, turning their heads. I thought that they had seen me. I hesitated and the women came on. Their painted eyes shone and their red lips glistened. The ornaments on their bodies flashed. They walked straight into me.

I made noise then, all I had in my lungs. And the women passed through me. They spoke to the merchants and the merchants laughed. They went off together down the street. They hadn't seen me. They hadn't heard me. And when I got in their way I was no more than a shadow. They passed through me.

I sat down on the stones of the street and tried to think. I sat for a long time. Men and women walked through me as through the empty air. I sought to remember any sudden pain, as of an arrow in the back that might have killed me between two seconds, so that I hadn't known about it. It seemed more likely that I should be the ghost than the other way around.

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I couldn't remember. My body felt solid to my hands as did the stones I sat on. They were cold and finally the cold got me up and sent me on again. There was no reason to hide any more. I walked down the middle of the street and I got used to not turning aside.

I came to another wall, running at right angles back into the city. I followed that and it curved around gradually until I found myself back at the market place, at the inner end of it. There was a gateway, with the main part of the city beyond it, and the wall continued. The non-humans passed back and forth through the gate but no human did except the slaves. I realized then that all this section was a ghetto for the humans who came to Shandakor with the caravans.

I remembered how Corin had felt about me. And I wondered—granted that I were still alive and that some of the people of Shandakor were still on the same plane as myself—how they would feel about me if I trespassed in their city.

There was a fountain in the marketplace. The water sprang up sparkling in the colored light and filled a wide basin of carved stone. Men and women were drinking from it. I went to the fountain but when I put my hands in it all I felt was a dry basin filled with dust. I lifted my hands and let the dust trickle from them. I could see it clearly. But I saw the water too. A child leaned over and splashed it and it wetted the garments of the people. They struck the child and he cried and there was no sound.

I went on through the gate that was forbidden to the human race.

The avenues were wide. There were trees and flowers, wide parks and garden villas, great buildings as graceful as they were tall. A wise proud city, ancient in culture but not decayed, as beautiful as Athens but rich and strange, with a touch of the alien in every line of it. Can you think what it was like to walk in that city, among the silent throngs that were not human—to see the glory of it, that was not human either?

The towers of jade and cinnabar, the golden minarets, the lights and the colored silks, the enjoyment and the strength. And the people of Shandakor! No matter how far their souls have gone they will never forgive me.

How long I wandered I don't know. I had almost lost my fear in wonder at what I saw. And then, all at once in that deathly stillness, I heard a sound—the quick, soft scuffing of sandaled feet.

IV

I STOPPED where I was, in the middle of a plaza. The tall silver-crested ones drank wine under canopies of dusky blooms and in the center a score of winged girls as lovely as swans danced a slow strange measure that was more like flight than dancing. I looked all around. There were many people. How could you tell which one had made a noise?

Silence.

I turned and ran across the marble paving. I ran hard and then suddenly I stopped again, listening. *Scuff-scuff*—no more than a whisper, very light and swift. I spun around but it was gone. The soundless people walked and the dancers wove and shifted, spreading their white wings.

Someone was watching me. Some one of those indifferent shadows was not a shadow.

I went on. Wide streets led off from the plaza. I took one of them. I tried the trick of shifting pace and two or three times I caught the echo of other steps than mine. Once I knew it was deliberate. Whoever followed me slipped silently among the noiseless crowd, blending with them, protected by them, only making a show of footsteps now and then to goad me.

I spoke to that mocking presence. I talked to it and listened to my own voice

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ringing hollow from the walls. The groups of people ebbed and flowed around me and there was no answer.

I tried making sudden leaps here and there among the passers-by with my arms outspread. But all I caught was empty air. I wanted a place to hide and there was none.

The street was long. I went its length and the someone followed me. There were many buildings, all lighted and populous and deathly still. I thought of trying to hide in the buildings but I could not bear to be closed in between walls with those people who were not people.

I came into a great circle, where a number of avenues met around the very tall tower I had seen with the revolving globe on top of it. I hesitated, not knowing which way to go. Someone was sobbing and I realized that it was myself, laboring to breathe. Sweat ran into the corners of my mouth and it was cold, and bitter.

A pebble dropped at my feet with a brittle *click*.

I bolted out across the square. Four or five times, without reason, like a rabbit caught in the open, I changed course and fetched up with my back against an ornamental pillar. From somewhere there came a sound of laughter.

I began to yell. I don't know what I said. Finally I stopped and there was only the silence and the passing throngs, who did not see nor hear me. And now it seemed to me that the silence was full of whispers just below the threshold of hearing.

A second pebble clattered off the pillar above my head. Another stung my body. I sprang away from the pillar. There was laughter and I ran.

There were infinities of streets, all glowing with color. There were many faces, strange faces, and robes blown out on a night wind, litters with scarlet curtains and beautiful cars like chariots drawn by beasts. They flowed past me like smoke, without sound, without substance, and the laughter pursued me, and I ran.

Four men of Shandakor came toward me. I plunged through them *but their bodies opposed mine, their hands caught me and I could see their eyes, their black shining eyes, looking at me . . .*

I struggled briefly and then it was suddenly very dark.

The darkness caught me up and took me somewhere. Voices talked far away. One of them was a light young shiny sort of voice. It matched the laughter that had haunted me down the streets. I hated it.

I hated it so much that I fought to get free of the black river that was carrying me. There was a vertiginous whirling of light and sound and stubborn shadow and then things steadied down and I was ashamed of myself for having passed out.

I was in a room. It was fairly large, very beautiful, very old, the first place I had seen in Shandakor that showed real age—Martian age, that runs back before history had begun on Earth. The floor, of some magnificent somber stone the color of a moonless night, and the pale slim pillars that upheld the arching roof all showed the hollowings and smoothnesses of centuries. The wall paintings had dimmed and softened and the rugs that burned in pools of color on that dusky floor were worn as thin as silk.

There were men and women in that room, the alien folk of Shandakor. But these breathed and spoke and were alive. One of them, a girl-child with slender thighs and little pointed breasts, leaned against a pillar close beside me. Her black eyes watched me, full of dancing lights. When she saw that I was awake again she smiled and flicked a pebble at my feet.

I got up. I wanted to get that golden body between my hands and make it scream. And she said in High Martian, "Are you a human? I have never seen one before close to."

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A MAN in a dark robe said, "Be still, Duani." He came and stood before me. He did not seem to be armed but others were and I remembered Corin's little weapon. I got hold of myself and did none of the things I wanted to do.

"What are you doing here?" asked the man in the dark robe.

I told him about myself and Corin, omitting only the fight that he and I had had before he died. and I told him how the hillmen had robbed me.

"They sent me here," I finished, "to ask for water."

Someone made a harsh humorless sound. The man before me said, "They were in a jesting mood."

"Surely you can spare some water and a beast!"

"Our beasts were slaughtered long ago. And as for water . . ." He paused, then asked bitterly, "Don't you understand? We are dying here of thirst!"

I looked at him and at the she-imp called Duani and the others. "You don't show any signs of it," I said.

"You saw how the human tribes have gathered like wolves upon the hills. What do you think they wait for? A year ago they found and cut the buried aqueduct that brought water into Shandakor from the polar cap. All they needed then was patience. And their time is very near. The store we had in the cisterns is almost gone."

A certain anger at their submissiveness made me say, "Why do you stay here and die like mice bottled up in a jar? You could have fought your way out. I've seen your weapons."

"Our weapons are old and we are very few. And suppose that some of us did survive—tell me again, Earthman, how did Corin fare in the world of men?" He shook his head. "Once we were great and Shandakor was mighty. The human tribes of half a world paid tribute to us. We are only the last poor shadow of our race but we will not beg from men!"

"Besides," said Duani softly, "where else could we live but in Shandakor?"

"What about the others?" I asked. "The silent ones."

"They are the past," said the dark-robed man and his voice rang like a distant flare of trumpets.

Still I did not understand. I did not understand at all. But before I could ask more questions a man came up and said, "Rhul, he will have to die."

The tufted tips of Duani's ears quivered and her crest of silver curls came almost erect.

"No, Rhul!" she cried. "At least not right away."

There was a clamor from the others, chiefly in a rapid angular speech that must have predated all the syllables of men. And the one who had spoken before to Rhul repeated, "He will have to die! He has no place here. And we can't spare water."

"I'll share mine with him," said Duani, "for awhile."

I didn't want any favors from her and said so. "I came here after supplies. You haven't any, so I'll go away again. It's as simple as that." I couldn't buy from the barbarians, but I might make shift to steal.

Rhul shook his head. "I'm afraid not. We are only a handful. For years our single defense has been the living ghosts of our past who walk the streets, the shadows who man the walls. The barbarians believe in enchantments. If you were to enter Shandakor and leave it again alive the barbarians would know that the enchantment cannot kill. They would not wait any longer."

Angrily, because I was afraid, I said, "I can't see what difference that would make. You're going to die in a short while anyway."

"But in our own way, Earthman, and in our own time. Perhaps, being human, you can't understand that. It is a question of pride. The oldest race of Mars will end well, as it began."

He turned away with a small nod of the head that said *kill him*—as easily as that. And I saw the ugly little weapons rise.

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V

THERE was a split second then that seemed like a year. I thought of many things but none of them were any good. It was a devil of a place to die without even a human hand to help me under. And then Duani flung her arms around me.

"You're all so full of dying and big thoughts!" she yelled at them. "And you're all paired off or so old you can't do anything but think! What about *me*? I don't have anyone to talk to and I'm sick of wandering alone, thinking how I'm going to die! Let me have him just for a little while? I told you I'd share my water."

On Earth a child might talk that way about a stray dog. And it is written in an old Book that a live dog is better than a dead lion. I hoped they would let her keep me.

They did. Rhul looked at Duani with a sort of weary compassion and lifted his hand. "Wait," he said to the men with the weapons. "I have thought how this human may be useful to us. We have so little time left now that it is a pity to waste any of it, yet much of it must be used up in tending the machine. He could do that labor—and a man can keep alive on very little water."

The others thought that over. Some of them dissented violently, not so much on the grounds of water as that it was unthinkable that a human should intrude on the last days of Shandakor. Corin had said the same thing. But Rhul was an old man. The tufts of his pointed ears were colorless as glass and his face was graven deep with years and wisdom had distilled in him its bitter brew.

"A human of our own world, yes. But this man is of Earth and the men of Earth will come to be the new rulers of Mars as we were the old. And Mars will love them no better than she did us because they are as alien as we. So it is not unfitting that he should see us out."

They had to be content with that. I think they were already so close to the end that they did not really care. By ones and twos they left as though already they had wasted too much time away from the wonders that there were in the streets outside. Some of the men still held the weapons on me and others went and brought precious chains such as the human slaves had worn—shackles, so that I should not escape. They put them on me and Duani laughed.

"Come," said Rhul, "and I will show you the machine."

He led me from the room and up a winding stair. There were tall embrasures and looking through them I discovered that we were in the base of the very high tower with the globe. They must have carried me back to it after Duani had chased me with her laughter and her pebbles. I looked out over the glowing streets, so full of splendor and of silence, and asked Rhul why there were no ghosts inside the tower.

"You have seen the globe with the crystal rods?"

"Yes."

"We are under the shadow of its core. There had to be some retreat for us into reality. Otherwise we would lose the meaning of the dream."

The winding stair went up and up. The chain between my ankles clattered musically. Several times I tripped on it and fell.

"Never mind," Duani said. "You'll grow used to it."

We came at last into a circular room high in the tower. And I stopped and stared.

MOST of the space in that room was occupied by a web of metal girders that supported a great gleaming shaft. The shaft disappeared upward through the roof. It was not tall but very massive, revolving slowly and quietly. There were traps, presumably for access to the offset shaft and the cogs that turned it. A ladder led to a trap in the roof.

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All the visible metal was sound with only a little surface corrosion. What the alloy was I don't know and when I asked Rhul he only smiled rather sadly. "Knowledge is found," he said, "only to be lost again. Even we of Shandakor forget."

Every bit of that enormous structure had been shaped and polished and fitted into place by hand. Nearly all the Martian peoples work in metal. They seem to have a genius for it and while they are not and apparently never have been mechanical, as some of our races are on Earth, they find many uses for metal that we have never thought of.

But this before me was certainly the high point of the metal-workers' craft. When I saw what was down below, the beautifully simple power plant and the rotary drive set-up with fewer moving parts than I would have thought possible, I was even more respectful. "How old is it?" I asked and again Rhul shook his head.

"Several thousand years ago there is a record of the yearly Hosting of the Shadows and it was not the first." He motioned me to follow him up the ladder, bidding Duani sternly to remain where she was. She came anyway.

There was a railed platform open to the universe and directly above it swung the mighty globe with its crystal rods that gleamed so strangely. Shandakor lay beneath us, a tapestry of many colors, bright and still, and out along the dark sides of the valley the tribesmen waited for the light to die.

"When there is no one left to tend the machine it will stop in time and then the men who have hated us so long will take what they want of Shandakor. Only fear has kept them out this long. The riches of half a world flowed through these streets and much of it remained."

He looked up at the globe. "Yes," he said, "we had knowledge. More, I think, than any other race of Mars."

"But you wouldn't share it with the humans."

Rhul smiled. "Would you give little children weapons to destroy you? We gave men better ploughshares and brighter ornaments and if they invented a machine we did not take it from them. But we did not tempt and burden them with knowledge that was not their own. They were content to make war with sword and spear and so they had more pleasure and less killing and the world was not torn apart."

"And you—how did you make war?"

"We defended our city. The human tribes had nothing that we coveted, so there was no reason to fight them except in self-defense. When we did we won." He paused. "The other non-human races were more stupid or less fortunate. They perished long ago."

HE TURNED again to his explanations of the machine. "It draws its power directly from the sun. Some of the solar energy is converted and stored within the globe to serve as the light-source. Some is sent down to turn the shaft."

"What if it should stop," Duani said, "while we're still alive?" She shivered, looking out over the beautiful streets.

"It won't—not if the Earthman wishes to live."

"What would I have to gain by stopping it?" I demanded.

"Nothing. And that," said Rhul, "is why I trust you. As long as the globe turns you are safe from the barbarians. After we are gone you will have the pick of the loot of Shandakor."

How I was going to get away with it afterward he did not tell me.

He motioned me down the ladder again but I asked him, "What *is* the globe, Rhul? How does it make the—the Shadows?"

He frowned. "I can only tell you what has become, I'm afraid, mere traditional knowledge. Our wise men studied deeply into the properties of light. They learned that light has a definite effect upon solid matter and they believed, because of that effect, that stone and metal and crystalline things retain a 'memory' of all

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that they have 'seen.' Why this should be I do not know."

I didn't try to explain to him the quantum theory and the photo-electric effect nor the various experiments of Einstein and Millikan and the men who followed them. I didn't know them well enough myself and the old High Martian is deficient in such terminology.

I only said, "The wise men of my world also know that the impact of light tears away tiny particles from the substance it strikes."

I was beginning to get a glimmering of the truth. Light-patterns 'cut' in the electrons of metal and stone—sound-patterns cut in unlikely-looking mediums of plastic, each needing only the proper 'needle' to recreate the recorded melody or the recorded picture.

"They constructed the globe," said Rhul. "I do not know how many generations that required nor how many failures they must have had. But they found at last the invisible light that makes the stones give up their memories."

In other words they had found their needle. What wave-length or combination of wave-lengths in the electromagnetic spectrum flowed out from those crystal rods, there was no way for me to know. But where they probed the walls and the paving blocks of Shandakor they scanned the hidden patterns that were buried in them and brought them forth again in form and color—as the electron needle brings forth whole symphonies from a little ridged disc.

How they had achieved sequence and selectivity was another matter. Rhul said something about the 'memories' having different lengths. Perhaps he meant depth of penetration. The stones of Shandakor were ages old and the outer surfaces would have worn away. The earliest impressions would be gone altogether or at least have become fragmentary and extremely shallow.

Perhaps the scanning beams could differentiate between the overlapping layers of impressions by that fraction of a micron difference in depth. Photons only penetrate so far into any given substance but if that substance is constantly growing less in thickness the photons would have the effect of going deeper. I imagine the globe was accurate in centuries or numbers of centuries, not in years.

However it was, the Shadows of a golden past walked the streets of Shandakor and the last men of the race waited quietly for death, remembering their glory.

Rhul took me below again and showed me what my tasks would be, chiefly involving a queer sort of lubricant and a careful watch over the power leads. I would have to spend most of my time there but not all of it. During the free periods, Duani might take me where she would.

The old man went away. Duani leaned herself against a girder and studied me with intense interest. "How are you called?" she asked.

"John Ross."

"JonRoss," she repeated and smiled. She began to walk around me, touching my hair, inspecting my arms and chest, taking a child's delight in discovering all the differences there were between herself and what we call a human. And that was the beginning of my captivity.

VI

THERE were days and nights, scant food and scanter water. There was Duani. And there was Shandakor. I lost my fear. And whether I lived to occupy the Chair or not, this was something to have seen.

Duani was my guide. I was tender of my duties because my neck depended on them but there was time to wander in the streets, to watch the crowded pageant that was not and sense the stillness and the desolation that were so cruelly real.

I began to get the feel of what this alien culture had been like and how it had dominated half a world without the

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need of conquest.

In a Hall of Government, built of white marble and decorated with wall friezes of austere magnificence, I watched the careful choosing and the crowning of a king. I saw the places of learning. I saw the young men trained for war as fully as they were instructed in the arts of peace. I saw the pleasure gardens, the theatres, the forums, the sporting fields—and I saw the places of work, where the men and women of Shandakor coaxed beauty from their looms and forges to trade for the things they wanted from the human world.

The human slaves were brought by their own kind to be sold, and they seemed to be well treated, as one treats a useful animal in which one has invested money. They had their work to do but it was only a small part of the work of the city.

The things that could be had nowhere else on Mars—the tools, the textiles, the fine work in metal and precious stones, the glass and porcelain—were fashioned by the people of Shandakor and they were proud of their skill. Their scientific knowledge they kept entirely to themselves, except what concerned agriculture or medicine or better ways of building drains and houses.

They were the lawgivers, the teachers. And the humans took all they would give and hated them for it. How long it had taken these people to attain such a degree of civilization Duani could not tell me. Neither could old Rhul.

"It is certain that we lived in communities, had a form of civil government, a system of numbers and written speech, before the human tribes. There are traditions of an earlier race than ours, from whom we learned these things. Whether or not this is true I do not know."

In its prime Shandakor had been a vast and flourishing city with countless thousands of inhabitants. Yet I could see no signs of poverty or crime. I couldn't even find a prison.

"Murder was punishable by death," said Rhul, "but it was most infrequent. Theft was for slaves. We did not stoop to it." He watched my face, smiling a little acid smile. "That startles you—a great city without suffering or crime or places of punishment."

I had to admit that it did. "Elder race or not, how did you manage to do it? I'm a student of cultures, both here and on my own world. I know all the usual patterns of development and I've read all the theories about them—but Shandakor doesn't fit any of them."

Rhul's smile deepened. "You are human," he said. "Do you wish the truth?"

"Of course."

"Then I will tell you. We developed the faculty of reason."

For a moment I thought he was joking. "Come," I said, "man is a reasoning being—on Earth the only reasoning being."

"I do not know of Earth," he answered courteously. "But on Mars man has always said, 'I reason, I am above the beasts because I reason.' And he has been very proud of himself because he could reason. It is the mark of his humanity. Being convinced that reason operates automatically within him he orders his life and his government upon emotion and superstition.

"He hates and fears and believes, not with reason but because he is told to by other men or by tradition. He does one thing and says another and his reason teaches him no difference between fact and falsehood. His bloodiest wars are fought for the merest whim—and that is why we did not give him weapons. His greatest follies appear to him the highest wisdom, his basest betrayals become noble acts—and that is why we could not teach him justice. We learned to reason. Man only learned to talk."

I understood then why the human tribes had hated the men of Shandakor. I said angrily, "Perhaps that is so on Mars. But only reasoning minds can develop great technologies and we hu-

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mans of Earth have outstripped yours a million times. All right, you know or knew some things we haven't learned yet, in optics and some branches of electronics and perhaps in metallurgy. But . . ."

I went on to tell him all the things we had that Shandakor did not. "You never went beyond the beast of burden and the simple wheel. We achieved flight long ago. We have conquered space and the planets. We'll go on to conquer the stars!"

Rhul nodded. "Perhaps we were wrong. We remained here and conquered ourselves." He looked out toward the slopes where the barbarian army waited and he sighed. "In the end it is all the same."

DAYS and nights and Duani, bringing me food, sharing her water, asking questions, taking me through the city. The only thing she would not show me was something they called the Place of Sleep. "I shall be there soon enough," she said and shivered.

"How long?" I asked. It was an ugly thing to say.

"We are not told. Rhul watches the level in the cisterns and when it's time . . ." She made a gesture with her hands. "Let us go up on the wall."

We went up among the ghostly soldiery and the phantom banners. Outside there were darkness and death and the coming of death. Inside there were light and beauty, the last proud blaze of Shandakor under the shadow of its doom. There was an eerie magic in it that had begun to tell on me. I watched Duani. She leaned against the parapet, looking outward. The wind ruffled her silver crest, pressed her garments close against her body. Her eyes were full of moonlight and I could not read them. Then I saw that there were tears.

I put my arm around her shoulders. She was only a child, an alien child, not of my race or breed . . .

"JonRoss."

"Yes?"

"There are so many things I will never know."

It was the first time I had touched her. Those curious curls stirred under my fingers, warm and alive. The tips of her pointed ears were soft as a kitten's.

"Duani."

"What?"

"I don't know . . ."

I kissed her. She drew back and gave me a startled look from those black brilliant eyes and suddenly I stopped thinking that she was a child and I forgot that she was not human and—I didn't care.

"Duani, listen. You don't have to go to the Place of Sleep."

She looked at me, her cloak spread out upon the night wind, her hands against my chest.

"There's a whole world out there to live in. And if you aren't happy there I'll take you to my world, to Earth. There isn't any reason why you have to die!"

Still she looked at me and did not speak. In the streets below the silent throngs went by and the towers glowed with many colors. Duani's gaze moved slowly to the darkness beyond the wall, to the barren valley and the hostile rocks.

"No."

"Why not? Because of Rhul, because of all this talk of pride and race?"

"Because of truth. Corin learned it."

I didn't want to think about Corin. "He was alone. You're not. You'd never be alone."

She brought her hands up and laid them on my cheeks very gently. "That green star, that is your world. Suppose it were to vanish and you were the last of all the men of Earth. Suppose you lived with me in Shandakor forever—would you not be alone?"

"It wouldn't matter if I had you."

She shook her head. "It would matter. And our two races are as far apart as the stars. We would have nothing to share between us."

Remembering what Rhul had told me

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I flared up and said some angry things. She let me say them and then she smiled. "It is none of that, JonRoss." She turned to look out over the city. "This is my place and no other. When it is gone I must be gone too."

Quite suddenly I hated Shandakor.

I didn't sleep much after that. Every time Duani left me I was afraid she might never come back. Rhul would tell me nothing and I didn't dare to question him too much. The hours rushed by like seconds and Duani was happy and I was not. My shackles had magnetic locks. I couldn't break them and I couldn't cut the chains.

ONE evening Duani came to me with something in her face and in the way she moved that told me the truth long before I could make her put it into words. She clung to me, not wanting to talk, but at last she said, "Today there was a casting of lots and the first hundred have gone to the Place of Sleep."

"It is the beginning, then."

She nodded. "Every day there will be another hundred until all are gone."

I couldn't stand it any longer. I thrust her away and stood up. "You know where the 'keys' are. Get these chains off me!"

She shook her head. "Let us not quarrel now, JonRoss. Come. I want to walk in the city."

We had quarreled more than once, and fiercely. She would not leave Shandakor and I couldn't take her out by force as long as I was chained. And I was not to be released until everyone but Rhul had entered the Place of Sleep and the last page of that long history had been written.

I walked with her among the dancers and the slaves and the bright-cloaked princes. There were no temples in Shandakor. If they worshipped anything it was beauty and to that their whole city was a shrine. Duani's eyes were rapt and there was a remoteness on her now.

I held her hand and looked at the towers of turquoise and cinnabar, the pavings of rose quartz and marble, the walls of pink and white and deep red coral, and to me they were hideous. The ghostly crowds, the mockery of life, the phantom splendors of the past were hideous, a drug, a snare.

"The faculty of reason!" I thought and saw no reason in any of it.

I looked up to where the great globe turned and turned against the sky, keeping these mockeries alive. "Have you ever seen the city as it is—without the Shadows?"

"No. I think only Rhul, who is the oldest, remembers it that way. I think it must have been very lonely. Even then there were less than three thousand of us left."

It must indeed have been lonely. They must have wanted the Shadows as much to people the empty streets as to fend off the enemies who believed in magic.

I kept looking at the globe. We walked for a long time. And then I said, "I must go back to the tower."

She smiled at me very tenderly. "Soon you will be free of the tower—and of these." She touched the chains. "No, don't be sad, JonRoss. You will remember me and Shandakor as one remembers a dream." She held up her face, that was so lovely and so unlike the meaty faces of human women, and her eyes were full of sombre lights. I kissed her and then I caught her up in my arms and carried her back to the tower.

In that room, where the great shaft turned, I told her, "I have to tend the things below. Go up onto the platform, Duani, where you can see all Shandakor. I'll be with you soon."

I don't know whether she had some hint of what was in my mind or whether it was only the imminence of parting that made her look at me as she did. I thought she was going to speak but she did not, climbing the ladder obediently. I watched her slender golden body vanish upward. Then I went into the

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chamber below.

There was a heavy metal bar there that was part of a manual control for regulating the rate of turn. I took it off its pin. Then I closed the simple switches on the power plant. I tore out all the leads and smashed the connections with the bar. I did what damage I could to the cogs and the offset shaft. I worked very fast. Then I went up into the main chamber again. The great shaft was still turning but slowly, ever more slowly.

There was a cry from above me and I saw Duani. I sprang up the ladder, thrusting her back onto the platform. The globe moved heavily of its own momentum. Soon it would stop but the white fires still flickered in the crystal rods. I climbed up onto the railing, clinging to a strut. The chains on my wrists and ankles made it hard but I could reach. Duani tried to pull me down. I think she was screaming. I hung on and smashed the crystal rods with the bar, as many as I could.

There was no more motion, no more light. I got down on the platform again and dropped the bar. Duani had forgotten me. She was looking at the city.

The lights of many colors that had burned there were burning still but they were old and dim, cold embers without radiance. The towers of jade and turquoise rose up against the little moons and they were broken and cracked with time and there was no glory in them. They were desolate and very sad. The night lay clotted around their feet. The streets, the plazas and the market squares were empty, their marble paving blank and bare. The soldiers had gone from the walls of Shandakor, with their banners and their bright mail, and there was no longer any movement anywhere within the gates.

DUANI let out one small voiceless cry. And as though in answer to it, suddenly from the darkness of the valley and the slopes beyond there rose a thin fierce howling as of wolves.

"Why?" she whispered. *"Why?"* She turned to me. Her face was pitiful. I caught her to me.

"I couldn't let you die! Not for dreams and visions, nothing. Look, Duani. Look at Shandakor." I wanted to force her to understand. "Shandakor is broken and ugly and forlorn. It is a dead city—but you're alive. There are many cities but only one life for you."

Still she looked at me and it was hard to meet her eyes. She said, "We knew all that, JonRoss."

"Duani, you're a child, you've only a child's way of thought. Forget the past and think of tomorrow. We can get through the barbarians. Corin did. And after that . . ."

"And after that you would still be human—and I would not."

From below us in the dim and empty streets there came a sound of lamentation. I tried to hold her but she slipped out from between my hands. "And I am glad that you are human," she whispered. "You will never understand what you have done."

And she was gone before I could stop her, down into the tower.

I went after her. Down the endless winding stairs with my chains clattering between my feet, out into the streets, the dark and broken and deserted streets of Shandakor. I called her name and her golden body went before me, fleet and slender, distant and more distant. The chains dragged upon my feet and the night took her away from me.

I stopped. The whelming silence rushed smoothly over me and I was bitterly afraid of this dark dead Shandakor that I did not know. I called again to Duani and then I began to search for her in the shattered shadowed streets. I know now how long it must have been before I found her.

For when I found her, she was with the others. The last people of Shandakor, the men and the women, the women first, were walking silently in a long line toward a low flat-roofed

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building that I knew without telling was the Place of Sleep.

They were going to die and there was no pride in their faces now. There was a sickness in them, a sickness and a hurt in their eyes as they moved heavily forward, not looking, not wanting to look at the sordid ancient streets that I had stripped of glory.

"Duani!" I called, and ran forward but she did not turn in her place in the line. And I saw that she was weeping.

Rhul turned toward me, and his look had a weary contempt that was bitterer than a curse. "Of what use, after all, to kill you now?"

"But I did this thing! *I* did it!"

"You are only human."

The long line shuffled on and Duani's little feet were closer to that final doorway. Rhul looked upward at the sky. "There is still time before the sunrise. The women at least will be spared the indignity of spears."

"Let me go with her!"

I tried to follow her, to take my place in line. And the weapon in Rhul's hand moved and there was the pain and I lay as Corin had lain while they went silently on into the Place of Sleep.

The barbarians found me when they came, still half doubtful, into the city after dawn. I think they were afraid of me. I think they feared me as a wizard who had somehow destroyed all the folk of Shandakor.

For they broke my chains and healed my wounds and later they even gave me out of the loot of Shandakor the only thing I wanted—a bit of porcelain, shaped like the head of a young girl.

I sit in the Chair that I craved at the University and my name is written on the roll of the discoverers. I am eminent, I am respectable—I, who murdered the glory of a race.

Why didn't I go after Duani into the Place of Sleep? I could have crawled! I could have dragged myself across those stones. And I wish to God I had. I wish that I had died with Shandakor! ● ● ●

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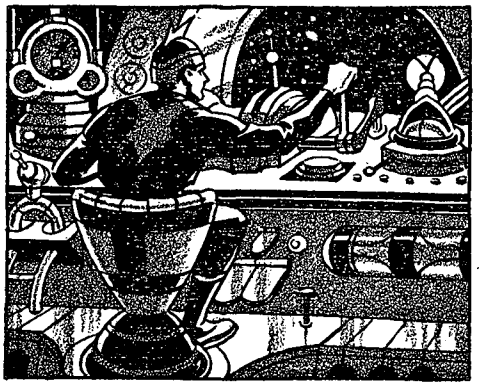

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Looking for *Something?*

Hypnotist Paul Marcus searched for it, deep in the mind of the blonde. He found it, too . . .

MIRSAR WEES, chief indoctrinator for Sol III sub-prefecture, was defying the intent of the Relaxation-room in his quarters. He buzzed furiously back and forth from metal wall to metal wall, his pedal-membrane making a cricket-like sound as the vacuum cups disengaged.

"The fools!" he thought. "The stupid, incompetent, mindless fools!"

Mirsar Wees was a Denebian. His race had originated more than three million earth years ago on the fourth planet circling the star Deneb—a planet no longer existing. His profile was curiously similar to that of a tall woman in a floor-length dress, with the vacuum-cup pedal-membrane contacting the floor under the "skirt." His eight specialized extensors waved now in a typical Denebian rage-pattern. His mouth, a thin transverse slit entirely separate from the olfactory-lung orifice directly below it, spewed forth a multi-lingual stream of invective against the assistant who cowered before him.

By FRANK HERBERT

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"How did this happen?" he shouted. "I take my first vacation in one hundred years and come back to find my career almost shattered by your incompetency!"

Mirsar Wees turned and buzzed back across the room. Through his vision-ring, an organ somewhat like a glittering white tricycle-tire jammed down about one-third of the distance over his head, he examined again the report on Earthling Paul Marcus and maintained a baleful stare upon his assistant behind him. Activating the vision cells at his left, he examined the wall chronometer.

"So little time," he muttered. "If only I had someone at Central Processing who could see a deviant when it comes by! Now I'll have to take care of this bumble myself, before it gets out of hand. If they hear of it back at the bureau . . ."

Mirsar Wees, the Denebian, a cog in the galaxy-wide korad-farming empire of his race, pivoted on his pedal-membrane and went out a door which opened soundlessly before him. The humans who saw his flame-like profile this night would keep alive the folk tales of ghosts, djinn, little people, fairies, elves, pixies . . .

Were they given the vision to see it, they would know also that an angry overseer had passed. But they would not see this, of course. That was part of Mirsar Wees' job.

IT WAS mainly because Paul Marcus was a professional hypnotist that he obtained an aborted glimpse of the rulers of the world.

The night it happened he was inducing a post-hypnotic command into the mind of an audience-participant to his show on the stage of the Roxy Theater in Tacoma, Washington.

Paul was a tall, thin man with a wide head which appeared large because of this feature although it really was not. He wore a black tailcoat and formal trousers, jewelled cuff links and chalkwhite cuffs, which gleamed and flashed as he gestured. A red spotlight in the balcony gave a Mephisto caste to his stage-setting, which was dominated by a backdrop of satin black against which gleamed two giant, luminous eyes. He was billed as "Marcus the Mystic" and he looked the part.

The subject was a blonde girl whom Paul had chosen because she displayed signs of a higher than ordinary intelligence, a general characteristic of persons who are easily hypnotized. The woman had a good figure and showed sufficient leg when she sat down on the chair to excite whistles and cat-calls from the front rows. She flushed, but maintained her composure.

"What is your name, please?" Paul asked.

She answered in a contralto voice, "Madelyne Walker."

"Miss or Mrs.?"

She said, "Miss."

Paul held up his right hand. From it dangled a gold chain on the end of which was a large paste gem with many facets cut into its surface. A spotlight in the wings was so directed that it reflected countless star-bursts from the gem.

"If you will look at the diamond," Paul said. "Just keep your eyes on it."

He began to swing the gem rhythmically, like a pendulum, from side to side. The girl's eyes followed it. Paul waited until her eyes were moving in rhythm with the swinging bauble before he began to recite in a slow monotone, timed to the pendulum:

"Sleep. You will fall asleep . . . deep sleep . . . deep sleep . . . asleep . . . deep asleep . . . asleep . . . asleep . . ."

Her eyes followed the gem.

"Your eyelids will become heavy," Paul said. "Sleep. Go to sleep. You are falling asleep . . . deep, restful sleep . . . healing sleep . . . deep asleep . . . asleep . . . asleep . . . asleep . . ."

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HER head began to nod, eyelids to close and pop open, slower and slower. Paul gently moved his left hand up to the chain. In the same monotone he said, "When the diamond stops swinging you will fall into a deep, restful sleep from which only I can awaken you." He allowed the gem to swing slower and slower in shorter and shorter sweeps. Finally, he put both palms against the chain and rotated it. The bauble at the end of the chain began to whirl rapidly, its facets coruscating with the reflections of the spotlight.

Miss Walker's head fell forward and Paul kept her from falling off the chair by grasping her shoulder. She was in deep trance. He began demonstrating to the audience the classic symptoms which accompany this—insensitivity to pain, body rigidity, complete obedience to the hypnotist's voice.

The show went along in routine fashion. Miss Walker barked like a dog. She became the dowager queen with dignified mein. She refused to answer to her own name. She conducted the imaginary symphony orchestra. She sang an operatic aria.

The audience applauded at the correct places in the performance. Paul bowed. He had his subject deliver a wooden bow, too. He wound up to the finale.

"When I snap my fingers you will awaken," he said. "You will feel completely refreshed as though after a sound sleep. Ten seconds after you awaken you will imagine yourself on a crowded streetcar where no one will give you a seat. You will be extremely tired. Finally, you will ask the fat man opposite you to give you his seat. He will do so and you will sit down. Do you understand?"

Miss Walker nodded her head.

"You will remember nothing of this when you awaken," Paul said.

He raised his hand to snap his fingers . . .

It was then that Paul Marcus received his mind-jarring idea. He held his hand up, fingers ready to snap, thinking about this idea, until he heard the audience stirring restlessly behind him. Then he shook his head and snapped his fingers.

Miss Walker awakened slowly, looked around, got up, and exactly ten seconds later began the streetcar hallucinations. She performed exactly as commanded, again awakened, and descended confusedly from the stage to more applause and whistles.

It should have been gratifying. But from the moment he received *the* idea, the performance could have involved someone other than Paul Marcus for all of the attention he gave it. Habit carried him through the closing routine, the brief comments on the powers of hypnotism, the curtain calls. Then he walked back to his dressing room slowly, preoccupied, unbuttoning his studs on the way as he always did following the last performance of the night. The concrete cave below stage echoed to his footsteps.

IN THE dressing room he removed the tailcoat and hung it in the wardrobe. Then he sat down before the dressing table mirror and began to cream his face preparatory to removing the light makeup he wore. He found it hard to meet his own eyes in the mirror.

"This is silly," he told himself sourly.

A knock sounded at the door. Without turning, he said, "Come in."

The door opened hesitantly and the blonde Miss Walker stepped into the room.

"Excuse me," she said. "The man at the door said you were in here and . . ."

Seeing her in the mirror, Paul turned around and stood up.

"Is something wrong?" he asked.

Miss Walker looked around her as though to make sure they were alone before she answered.

"Not exactly," she said.

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Paul gestured to a settee beside his dressing table. "Sit down, won't you?" he asked. He returned to the dressing table as Miss Walker seated herself.

"You'll excuse me if I go on with this chore," he said, taking a tissue to the grease paint under his chin.

Miss Walker smiled. "You remind me of a woman at her nightly beauty care," she said.

Paul thought: Another stage-struck miss, and the performance gives her the excuse to take up my time. He glanced at the girl out of the corners of his eyes. "Not bad, though . . ."

"You haven't told me to what I owe the pleasure of your company," he said.

Miss Walker's face clouded with thought.

"It's really very silly," she said.

Probably, Paul thought.

"Not at all," he said. "Tell me what's on your mind."

"Well, it's an idea I had while my friends were telling me what I did on the stage," she said. She grinned wryly. "I had the hardest time believing that there actually wasn't a streetcar up there. I'm still not absolutely convinced. Maybe you brought in a dummy streetcar with a lot of actors. Oh, I don't know!" She shook her head and put a hand to her eyes.

The way she said, "I don't know!" reminded Paul of his own idea; *the* idea. He decided to give Miss Walker the fast brush-off in order to devote more time to thinking this new idea through to some logical conclusion.

"What about the streetcar?" he asked.

THE girl's face assumed a worried expression. "I thought I was on a real streetcar," she said. "There was no audience, no . . . hypnotist. Nothing. Just the reality of riding the streetcar and being tired like you are after a hard day's work. I saw the people on the car. I smelled them. I felt the car under my feet. I heard the money bounce in the coin-catcher and all the other noises one hears on a streetcar—people talking, a man opening his newspaper. I saw the fat man sitting there in front of me. I asked him for his seat. I even felt embarrassed. I heard him answer and I sat down in his seat. It was warm and I felt the people pressing against me on both sides. It was very real."

"And what bothers you?" Paul asked.

She looked up from her hands which were tightly clasped in her lap.

"That bothers me," she said. "That streetcar. It was real. It was as real as anything I've ever known. It was as real as now. I believed in it. Now I'm told it wasn't real." Again she looked down at her hands. "What am I to believe?"

This is getting close to *the* idea, Paul thought.

"Can you express what bothers you in any other way?" he asked.

She looked him squarely in the eyes. "Yes," she said. "I got to thinking while my friends were talking to me. I got to wondering. What if all this—" she gestured around her—"our whole lives, our world, everything we see, feel, hear, smell, or sense in any way is more of the same. A hypnotic delusion!"

"Precisely!" Paul exhaled the word.

"What did you say?" she asked.

"I said, 'Precisely!' "

Her brows drew together. "Why?"

Paul turned toward her and rested his left elbow on the dressing table. "Because," he said, "at the very moment I was telling you what you would do when you awakened, at the moment I was giving you the commands which resulted in your hallucination, I got the same idea."

"My goodness!" she said. The very mildness of her exclamation made it seem more vehement than if she had sworn.

Paul turned back to the dressing table mirror. "I wonder if there could be something in telepathy as well?"

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Miss Walker looked at him in the mirror, the room seeming to draw in closely behind her. "It was an idea I couldn't keep to myself," she said. "I told my friends—I came with a married couple—but they just laughed at me. I decided on the spur of the moment to come back here and talk to you and I did it before I could lose my nerve. After all, you' hypnotist. You should know somet about this."

"It'll take some looking into," Paul said, "I wonder . . ." He turned toward Miss Walker. "Are you engaged tonight?"

HER expression changed. She looked at him as though her mother were whispering in her ear: "Watch out! Watch out! He's a man."

"Well, I don't know . . ." she said.

Paul put on his most winning smile. "I'm no backstage wolf," he said. "Please. I feel as though somebody had asked me to cut the Gordian knot, and I'd rather untie it—but I need help."

"What could we do?" she asked.

It was Paul's turn to hesitate. "There are several ways to approach the problem," he said. "We in America have only scratched the surface in our study of hypnotism." He doubled up his fist and thudded it gently on the dressing table. "Hell! I've seen witch doctors in Haiti who know more about it than I do. But . . ."

"What would you do first?" she asked.

"I'd . . . I'd . . ." Paul looked at her for a moment as though he really saw her for the first time. "I'd do this," he said. "Make yourself comfortable on that settee. Lean back. That's it."

"What are you going to do?" she asked.

"Well," Paul said, "it's pretty well established that these sensory hallucinations are centered in one part of the human nervous system which is laid bare by hypnotism. It's possible, by using hypnotism, to get at the commands other hypnotists have put there. I'm going to put you back in deep trance and let you search for the commands yourself. If something is commanding us to live an illusion, the command should be right there with all the others."

"I don't know," she said.

"Please," Paul urged. "We might be able to crack this thing right here and now in just a few minutes."

"All right." She still sounded hesitant, but she leaned back as directed.

Paul lifted his paste gem from the dressing table and focused the table spotlight on it. "Look at the diamond," he said. . . .

This time she fell into the trance more readily. Paul checked her for pain threshold, muscular control. She responded appropriately. He began questioning:

"Do you hear my voice?"

"Yes," she said.

"Do you know what hypnotic commands are in your mind?" he asked.

There was a long pause. Her lips opened dryly. "There are . . . commands," she said.

"Do you obey them?" he asked.

"I must."

"What is the most basic of these commands?" he asked.

"I . . . can . . . not . . . tell."

Paul almost rubbed his hands. A simple 'Don't talk about it,' he thought.

"Just nod your head if I repeat the command," he said. "Does it say, 'You must not tell'?"

Her head nodded.

Paul rubbed his hands against his pants legs and realized suddenly that he was perspiring excessively.

"What is it you must not tell?" he asked.

She shook her head without speaking.

"You must tell me," he said. "If you do not tell me, your right foot will begin to burn and itch unbearably and will continue to do so until you do tell

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me. Tell me what it is that you have been commanded not to tell."

Again she shook her head. She reached down and began to scratch her right foot. She pulled off her shoe.

"You must tell me," Paul said. "What is the first word of the command?"

The girl looked up at him, but her eyes remained unfocused.

"You . . ." she said.

It was as though she had brought the word from some dark place deep within her and the saying of it was almost too much to bear. She continued to scratch her right leg.

"What is the second word?" Paul asked.

She tried to speak, but failed.

"Is it 'must'?" he asked. "Nod your head if it is."

She nooded her head.

"You 'must' what?"

Again she was wordless.

He thought about it for a moment. "Sensory perception," he thought. He leaned forward. "Is it 'You must sense . . .'?" he asked. "Is it 'You must sense only . . .'?"

She relaxed. Her head nodded and she said, "Yes."

Paul took a deep breath.

"What is it 'You must sense only . . .'?" he asked.

She opened her mouth, her lips moved, but no sound issued.

He felt like screaming at her, dragging the answer from her mind with his hands.

"What is it?" His voice cracked on the question. "Tell me!"

She shook her head from side to side. He noticed signs of awakening.

Again he took a deep breath. "What will happen to you if you tell me?"

"I'll die," she said.

He leaned forward and lowered his voice to a confidential tone. "That is foolishness," he said. "You can't die just because you say a few words. You know that. Now tell me what it is that you have been ordered to sense."

She stared straight ahead of her at nothing, mouth open. Paul lowered his head to look directly into her eyes. "Do you see me?" he asked.

"No," she said.

"What do you see?" he asked.

"I see death."

"Look at me instead," Paul said. "You remember me."

"You are death," she said.

"That's nonsense! Look at me," he commanded.

Her eyes opened wider. Paul stared into them. Her eyes seemed to grow and grow and grow and grow . . . Paul found himself unable to look away. There was nothing else in the world except two blue-gray eyes. A deep, resonant voice, like a low-register cello, filled his mind.

"You will forget everything that has happened tonight," it said. "You will die rather than remember. You will, you *must*, sense only those things which you have been commanded to sense. I, _____, command it. Do you remember me?"

Paul's lips formed the word, "yes".

"Who am I?" the voice asked.

Paul dampened his dry lips with his tongue. "You are death," he said.

BUREAUCRACY has a kind of timeless, raceless mold which makes its communiques recognizable as to type by the members of any bureau anywhere. The multiple copies, the precise wording to cover devious intent, the absolute protocol of address—all are of a pattern, whether the communication is to the Reconstruction Finance Corporation or the Denebian Bureau of Indoctrination.

Mirsar Wees knew the pattern as another instinct. He had been supervisor of indoctrination and overseer of the korad farming on Sol III for one hundred and fifty-seven of the planet's years. In that time, by faithfully following the letter of the Indoctrination Bureau's code and never an individual

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interpretation of its spirit, he had insured for himself a promotion to Co-ordinator of the entire Sol prefecture whenever such an opening occurred.

Having met another threat to his position and resolved it, knowing the security of his tenure, he sat before the mechanical secretary-transmitter in his office and dictated a letter to the Bureau. The vision-ring around his head glowed a dull amber as he relaxed the receptors in it. His body stretched out comfortably, taking a gentle massage from the chair.

"There has been considerable carelessness lately with the training of neo-indoctrinators," he said into the communo-tube.

Let a few heads fall at the bureau, he thought.

"There seems to be a feeling that, because we of the Sol prefecture are dealing with lesser beings, a lesser amount of care need be taken with the prefecture's indoctrinators. I have just dealt with a first-order threat to the Sol III korad supply, a threat which was directly attributable to neo-indoctrinator carelessness. A deviant was allowed to pass through the hands of three of our latest acquisitions from the College of Indoctrinators. These indoctrinators have been sent back for retraining."

HE THOUGHT in satisfaction: They will reflect that the korad secreted by the glands of our charges is necessary for their own immortality, and will be more severe at the training center because of that. And pensively: It is almost time for me to tell them of our breeding experiments to bring the korad glands to the exterior of these creatures, making more frequent draining possible. They will praticularly appreciate the niceties of indoctrination — increasing the mating pattern, increasing individual peril and, thereby, the longevity gland secretion, and the more strict visual limitation to keep the creatures from discovering the change. . . .

"I am sending a complete visio-corder report on how I met this threat," he spoke into the tube. "Briefly, I insinuated myself into the earth-being's presence and installed a more severe command. Standard procedure. It was not deemed practical to eliminate the creature because of the latest interpretations on command interference; it was felt that the being's elimination might set off further thought-patterns inimical to our designs.

"The creature was, therefore, commanded to mate with another of its ilk who is more stringently under our control. The creature also was removed from any labor involving the higher nerve-centers and has been put to another task, that of operating a transportation device called a streetcar.

"The mate has been subjected to the amputation of an appendage. Unfortunately, before I could take action, the creature I treated had started along an exceedingly clever line of action and had installed irremovable commands which made the appendage useless."

They will see how much of a deviant the creature was, he thought, and how careless the new indoctrinators were.

"The indoctrinator service must keep in mind at all times what happened to create the Sol planetoid belt. Those bodies, as we all know, once were the planet Dirad, the greatest korad source in the entire galaxy. Slipshod procedure employed by indoctrinators set up a situation similar to the one I have just nipped, and we were forced to destroy the entire planet. The potency of minds which have slipped from our control should be kept constantly before our attention. Dirad is an object lesson.

"The situation here is again completely normal, of course, and the korad supply is safe. We can go on draining the immortality of others—but *only as long as we maintain constant vigilance.*"

H signed it, "Cordially, Mirsar Wees, Chief Indoctrinator, Sol Sub-prefecture."

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Someday, he thought, it will be "Coordinator."

Rising from the mechano-secretary, Mirsar Wees moved over to the "incoming" tube of his report-panel and noticed a tube which his new assistant had tabbed with the yellow band of "extreme importance."

He inserted the tube into a translator, sat down, and watched as it dealt out the report:

"A Hindu creature has seen itself as it really is," the report said.

Mirsar Wees reached over and put a tracer-beam on his new assistant to observe how that worthy was meeting this threat.

The report buzzed on: "The creature went insane as per indoctrination command, but most unfortunately it is a member of a sect which worships insanity. Others are beginning to listen to its babblings."

The report concluded: "I make haste."

Mirsar Wees leaned back, relaxed and smiled blandly. The new assistant showed promise.

THE ETHER VIBRATES

(Continued from page 8)

number 10s. Oh, yes, I almost forgot one type. That's the one that goes:

Dear Mr. Mines: While idly leafing through back issues of magazines I haven't had time to read yet, memories of the good old days came floating back. . . .

3360th Co. G.P. Gunther AFB, Ala.

Love that sarge. Any time you want to be guest editor of SS just give us enough warning to have a key to the office made for you and you can have this swivel chair and fit your feet into the worn places on the desk. . . .

HIT THE DIRT
by Joe Gibson

Dear Sam: There's a funny thing about old Abdullah Leinster: he always comes up with something not only good, but of current and popular interest. He must read the newspapers. And Sam, old man, just WHO was the artist of this Jan. ish cover? And who's lousing up in the Art Dept., forgetting the artist's signature—just what do they think this is, another pulp magazine?

Whose else's leg can I pull around here? Ah—yours! Seems you didn't give Gordon Gibson, in TEV, a complete answer on who wrote *Fury*. It was Kuttner, of course; not John D. MacDonald, who is a guy I wish would stop wasting time on detectives and waste it on stf. Oh, well—ya gotta eat! But the mag-serial version of Kuttner's *Fury* came out, I think, under the pseudyonym-m-m—

In spite of all the Scotch flowing in my veins, Sam, old horse, and in spite of all the Scotch flowing in your veins, it seems neither of us is sure that Kuttner's magazine pseudonym was Anson MacDonald! *"Nichevo,"* as the Russkies say—"Oh, well!"—

Now, admittedly, the Coles seemed to have their ego deflated by some weird character or other asking if they'd read the original sources of the Lysenko gobbledygook. And here are two esteemed guys, L. Sprague de Camp of the planet Krishna and Dr. John D. Clark of the Naval Air Rocket Test Station, both with most commendable answers on the matter. And they know whereof they speak, but—

Why *bother* to answer?

"When ya hit the dirt, do it in cover, stupid, do it *in cover!* More dumb, green kids knocked off flapping their faces in the wide, open spaces than—" (Quotation from a buck sergeant, U.S. Infantry.)

May I suggest, gentlemen, that there are more commendable subjects for enjoyable discussion? Such as: There Are Plenty Of Beautiful Babes Reading Science-Fiction versus There Are Deleted Few Beautiful, etc., etc., etc.—

Hmmmmmm?—*24 Kensington Ave., Jersey City 4, N. J.*

Ah, Joe, you're slipping. If you look very carefully around the left biceps of the Arab right smack in the foreground, you will find the name of Earle Bergey blazoned imperishably, if indistinguishably. Didn't recognize the style, huh? Told you ole Marse Bergey had a trick or two up his sleeve. And how about VULCAN'S DOLLS, eh?

Anson MacDonald Kuttner? Can you be the only man in the world who doesn't know that's Heinlein? Leave us draw a merciful curtain over your blushes and go on to something interesting like your topic for study as outlined above.

See lead editorial.

TAGGING ALONG
by Gregg Calkins

Dear Sam (Mines, that is): 'Bout this time everybody should be wising up to just who does edit STARTLING. I couldn't stand seeing everybody write to Merwin all the time with your name

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on the masthead, so I thought I'd be original and write a letter to *you!* Surprised?

I don't know whether you have the magic touch or what, but you sure did the trick. What trick? Why a monthly STARTLING, of course. STARTLING can afford to go monthly. I hope you realize that lots of promags can't do that—for instance, with you as a monthly, TWS is better off as it is (every other month). Some mags are ok once every other month, but become unutterably boring at twice that rate. Not so STARTLING.

And if you're responsible for the change in Bergey. . . . How did you ever get the guy off the "babe, BEM, hero" triangle. (Did he do the January cover??—it doesn't say.) Somebody introduce him to Hubbard?? Anyhow, let's see more of him if he's finally going to start acting like an artist.

Bixby does a good job on what fmz reviews he manages to get into his review column, but I suspect he'd rather write editorials because he takes up more space gabbing than he does reviewing. It just may be that he doesn't have many fmz's to review, but if that's the case I'll see if I can't increase the number soon.

TEV is really getting to a fine point as readers columns go. A unique letter was one by Charles Baird in the January issue. He wants you to increase to 35c a copy. Frankly, can you afford to do so? I don't think STARTLING could, to be brutally frank with you. Besides, I think the material you are presenting now is quite adequate for my tastes, and if you keep that up I'll continue to buy STARTLING. Your quality won't deteriorate just because you have a lower price—just the opposite. A 35c price forces quite a few fen to drop that mag and buy a cheaper one but one that still has quality—that's where you come in. See what I mean, Sam?

Your Movie Review policy is to be commended. I like the way it is presented very much, and its masthead is very easy to read and contains much valuable information about the technical side of the picture. More!

I still can't get over that cover, Sam. With a reeducated Bergey on the cover and the incomparable Finlay on the interiors I don't see how any mag can top you there (unless they cheat and use the one and only s-f artist, Bonestell.)

Wish you'd put on the title page the approximate date to expect the next issue on the newsstands. I've just got to look every day every month, and darn it Sam, that's awful hard. Just say something like "February issue on sale December 10" or some little thing like that, why don't you?

And why don't you give us an idea of what authors and stories to expect in the next issue? Or do we just have to be surprised??

I've got a final bone to chew on with the fen before I leave, Sam. I'm putting out a fanzine in January (which will already be out by the time this is printed) which I'm naming OOPSLA and which I intend to make someday (soon, I hope) comparable to such great 'zines as Quandry and maybe Slant. I know I can do better than a lot of zines in the field at present. The first issue has a *planned* contents page of Rog Phillips, Tom Covington, Shelby Vick and the great Lee Hoffman. Issue #2 should be even better, so you fen had better sub now. One thing, you fans. I hereby promise (IN PUBLIC PRINT!) to carry out to the best of my ability my debts to you as a faneditor. I intend to keep very strict books on OOPSLA's financial progress, and not a dime will be lost. Rest assured that if you mail me a dime (that's the price—10c) for a sample copy you'll either get a copy in return of the current issue, a post card asking you to wait until the next issue so I can send you one of them, or *your dime back!* I PROMISE YOU!!!

Which winds this letter up. No need to comment on your individual stories, Sam, as I'm sure quite a few better qualified fans than I will be sure to do so. Besides, I think all of your fiction is quality anyhow, so I'd just give a prejudiced opinion of the stories. Follow through what you've started in STARTLING, Sam and you'll always find me tagging along with you somewhere.—*930 Briarcliff Ave., Salt Lake City, Utah.*

Remind me to ask you, Gregg, if you're left-handed. This praise is going to turn our head. You don't mind if we retain our own notions about quality, do you? I'm glad you noticed STARTLING'S lead in freshness and variety though—that's what keeps it from getting monotonous. Have taken up with Production your request for putting in each issue the date the next issue will hit the stands. Think it can be done, so watch for it in future issues of SS.

FAVORITE FODDER
by Alice Bullock

Nice going, Samuel Mines! And don't tell me that these stories were all selected before Sam Merwin left either. Why should he wait until his name is no longer on the masthead to put out the best single issue of SS yet? Nope. Even a Merwin fan—and as an editor I really did like him—can't see him doing that.

Which doesn't mean I liked every story—for instance—LOST ART I didn't. The solution was too darned pat—the revolt of the Sympats came in too handily at just the right time, or was there a cutting job to blame it all on? THE WHEEL is beautifully done. John Wyndham has made a convert of me. I'll be watching for him. The old man pathetically real, the boy a nice, intelligent kid and not overdone.

Murray Leinster's JOURNEY TO BARKUT is whimsical, capricious, ingenuously naive and wholly charming. Like finding a new fairy tale back in little girl days. Disney might well veil Nasim thinly or even tone down the cross plot and play up Abdul's irrepressible antics and have a real, modern movie. I'd love to see him do it with this story. All the opportunity in the world for gorgeous color . . . and fantasy.

Speaking of fantasy I ran into some very interesting (to me at any rate) information in regard to fantasy. One eighth of the books that have hit best seller lists since 1662 in these United States (English colonies prior to Revolution included) have been fantasy. Placing on list of best sellers was based upon the requirement that any book to be so designated must have sold at least one percent of the population in the decade in which it was pub-

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lished. The requirement before 1690 was one thousand, with books such as PILGRIM'S PROGRESS and A CALL TO THE UNCONVERTED leading. What a long jump to FOREVER AMBER with a required sale of one million in 1945! And not all in number either! I wonder which books will make it for the decade ending with 1950? Darn it—the list didn't include last year. Under the science fiction flag Jules Verne made the list in 1873 with a sale of at least the required 375,000. (TWENTY THOUSAND LEAGUES UNDER THE SEA).

I suppose the above was interesting to me because of the defensive attitude I've developed about science fiction and fantasy. Perfectly nice people, in all sincerity, will say "No, I never read fantasy or science fiction. It's silly." Then go right on and say they never spend a Christmas without reading Dickens' CHRISTMAS CAROL. Some of your erudite authors might go to the limit some day and write an article about our favorite fodder and dangle it at one of the very sleek slicks. I say slick so that it will be under the noses of those who don't know how much fun there is to reading STARTLING STORIES and sister magazines even if they are in pulp format.—*812 Gildersleeve, Santa Fé, N. M.*

THE STAR WATCHERS was the last story bought jointly by Merwin and me, though WELL OF THE WORLDS had been bought some time before and hadn't yet been used. Since then, however, JOURNEY TO BARKUT, VULCAN'S DOLL, THE GLORY THAT WAS by L. Sprague de Camp—and yet to come: THE HELLFLOWER by George O. Smith were solos. Good too, said he, modestly.

Glad to see you like Wyndham. Did you see SURVIVAL in TWS for February? A honey. Your dope on fantasy book sales is very interesting; all the more so since it seems to contradict the opinions of the experts round town. You won't need to apologize for reading SS much longer; with improving covers and stories the magazine is becoming positively respectable (if you'll excuse the expression) and the most unexpected people are discovering to their amazement that they like it. Fact, you'll be in the best of company.

MOTHER'S CAKE
by Mrs. H. C. Gunn

Hi: Just finished reading THE ETHER VIBRATES. What have we here? A bunch of old biddies and nasty-minded little boys? That's what it sounds like. My family and myself and quite a few of my friends like every one of your covers and we haven't found a vulgar one yet. I'm getting sick and tired of some people trying to bring back 1890. Why don't they grow up and start living in today's world instead of yesterday's? At least they could keep their bigotry to themselves and let the rest of us enjoy the magazine.

They're just like the little boy who was a critic. He didn't like the way his mother baked a cake so he kept nagging until she changed the recipe and then he didn't like it half as well as he had liked the original.

I like some of your stories better than others, but I like them all.—*Box 545, Barstow, Calif.*

What a coincidence, this letter coming in just at this time! If any of you characters think I planted it, you're all wet; I found it after I wrote the editorial.

APPROVAL
by Klaus Kaufman

Dear Editor: TERRIFIC—the January issue of SS I mean. Keep it up and I'll be buying your magazine till doomsday. I won't list the stories in order of my preference as I think they were all great.

JOURNEY TO BARKUT . . . my comments can be found on page 13 in the box A MODERN ARABIAN NIGHTS.

LOST ART . . . different . . . well written. The ending, however, could have been more dramatic.

THE GREAT IDEA . . . Not a new idea but well written.

THE WHEEL . . . Best of the short stories. Let's see more of these.

HOW GREEN WAS MY MARTIAN . . . Yuk! Yuk! this guy writes like Bradbury. Very funny.

A plea from a reader who likes to read THE ETHER VIBRATES. Let's not have any more crack-pot formulas and ideas on time travel exct . . . messing up your good paper.

Your next issue promises to be as good or better. Keep up the good work.—*1 Water St., Newburgh, N. Y.*

So there is a Santa Klaus! S'nice.

HELP WANTED
by Anthony Boldt

Dear Sir: I would like first to make a request to your readers. If anyone has an extra copy of the following issues, I wish he would drop me a line: In SS, March and Summer '46; Jan., May and July '47; Jan., Mar., Nov. '48; Jan. '49. In TWS I need Fall '45, Oct. '47, Oct. '48.

About your stories, they are getting almost *too* good. Leinster's novel is positively the best he's ever done. Even better than THE LAWS OF CHANCE LOST. ART was also very good. I know A. Bertram Chandler is a pseudonym, but for whom? All three shorts were only mediocre with Reynolds as the best. More by him, please. Also more by Hamilton, vV, MacDowell, MacDonald, Vance, Williamson and Blish. I'd especially like to see them in novel length.—*118 Berkeley St., Toronto, Ont., Canada.*

Chandler is his real name so far as we know. He did once use the pseudonym of George

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Whitley, but that was some years ago. We've just bought a novelet by Hamilton, will probably see light in TWS. vV crops out in FANTASTIC next ish with SLAN. There are a couple of Vance jobs right now awaiting processing, including a sequel to ABERCROMBIE STATION called CHOLWELL'S CHICKENS. That hold you for a little while?

BLUD AND BLUNDER
by Buddy Johnson

Dear Sam (Mines, that is!): I won't open with any trite remarks but will get right to the gist and stuff.

Science fiction will almost necessarily contain essences of westerns, love and detective fiction because it is merely the portrayal of humans in a far distant time. It is almost certain that it will go through stages of development like this: exploratory trips, colonization, piracy, law and order and cities, just as we settled America. So stf is naturally going to be somewhat like westerns etc. The type of story most magazines feature nowadays are really adventure stories.

Take the old Cap Future novels. I've heard writers call them "blud and blunder" stories. That isn't entirely true. I think they had more to offer in the way of deeper significance.

In the January issue I liked JOURNEY TO BARKUT and LOST ART. THE WHEEL was just a filler and HOW GREEN WAS MY MARTIAN was silly. The artwork is swell.—*Route 5, Box 170, Eldorado, Kansas.*

You're just talking about one kind of stf story, Bud, the space opera. And to an extent you are right about it having some of the qualities of any adventure story. But that isn't the only kind of stf story. There is the story of ideas—or, if you will, adventure in ideas rather than physical adventure in space. And these are new conceptions with little or no resemblance to the buckety-buckety space opera. Even a space opera, however, should not be nothing more than a western with ray-guns. It should have an idea, or a problem which would make it impossible anywhere but in space. If you can easily change it to Montana from Mars it isn't a real stf story.

TOP OF THE LIST
by Tom Piper

Dear Ed: HOW GREEN WAS MY MARTIAN in the January issue was the best doggoned story I've ever read. Mack Reynolds is one of my favorites and I'm putting him on top of the list. Egads, have more stories by him. And thanks for going monthly.—*469 19th St., Santa Monica, Cal.*

This is known as a difference of opinion. They tell me it is the stuff that makes horse-racing. Also magazines.

PAGING SHELLEY
by Jim England

Dear Editor: Has it ever struck you how little attention is given to the depiction of emotion in the pages of science fiction? Or how seldom one finds really good description? In such novels as Wallace West's THE DARK TOWER in the July issue, for instance, and in most space operas of the type, one finds plenty of action and melodrama, but the emotions to fit are totally inadequate. The latter can only show that the writer has either not properly put himself in the place of the characters he is creating (as every author should) and is thus unable to imagine the emotions involved; or else that he doesn't possess the necessary ability to depict such emotions skilfully. Which can it be? I suspect that it is the latter.

If Shelley or D. H. Lawrence were alive today and writing science fiction they would have been able to do justice to such emotions. The emotions for instance that space-ship crews would experience on journeys between the stars, lasting periods of years, away from all the home ties of earth and (as the majority of stf stories cold-bloodedly assume) away from their women-folk. The emotions of men adventuring amongst the stars would certainly exceed those of all others ever made the subject of fiction since time began. And still stf writers ignore them in their hurry to get to the next act!

In your latest mags I would exlude from this criticism such stories as Leigh Brackett's THE WOMAN FROM ALTAIR and Hamilton's BIRTHPLACE OF CREATION. Hamilton, though he has his defects, can at least get the emotions into his space opera—sometimes. Let's have more stories like these, please; until the stf world's counterpart of D. H. Lawrence comes along to show us how it's really done.—*Students Union, Leeds University, Leeds, Yorks. Eng.*

This is something we have talked about before now, using different terms, not referring specifically to emotion, since this is only part of the problem. We have called for a broadening of the science-fiction story so that it deals with people instead of only with mechanical gadgets—people sometimes caught in a web of gadgets, but real people with real problems and real emotions. And the tide has already turned in that direction. By the time this sees print you'll already have read VULCAN'S DOLLS and I'd like to see another letter from you then.

THE GLAD HEART
by Bob Hoskins

Dear Sam: This issue of dear old SS is particularly gladdening to my heart, bringing out the fact that the dear old mag finally goes monthly. I only hope TWS follows suit. I recall that TWS once

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trod the monthly path about ten years ago.

Am also glad to see that my Weinbaum issue suggestion for FSM is being carried out, in part at least. Although I don't care for his stuff myself, it will be an essential part of any collection.

What in the name of all the immeasurable depths of Hades is Jerry Bixby's name doing on your fan column? Have you added him as a fixture of your staff? Jellybean was one of *Planet's* better editors.

Note Bergey is still doing your covers. Had hoped that Schomburg had permanently replaced him. This current cover looks something like Belarski at his best.

With your permission I'd like to ask Marion Bradley a question: Who was your English prof here at State Teachers' College? Wonder if Gheorghe (?) (Can't read his writing—Ed.) is still here. And what year did you leave? Maybe some of the present students knew you. Have already met your old friend Thyril Ladd. Thanks, Sammy.

The Finlay pics for the novel were an example of sheer beauty in the pulp field. The rest of the illos were dead, although Poulton was fair. Am glad to see Virgil back to his bubble style. They were always his best pics.

May I mention the ISFCC here? One of the better clubs. The initials stand for THE INTERNATIONAL SCIENCE FICTION CORRESPONDENCE CLUB. No dues. Only expense is a subscription to the club 'zine which costs half a buck per annum. (Competitors we should advertise yet, free!—Ed.) If you think you might be interested in the club and I think you will be if you like stf, write me for further details. I'll tell you all I can. Extremely insincerely. . . . *1 Thurlow Terrace, Albany 3, N.Y.*

SNARLY RIDES AGAIN
by Edward G. Seibel

Dear Daniel: Curse your miserable bones, may you be tossed to and devoured by the lions for publishing a letter I never expected to see in print. (SS Jan. '52). You have, by your treachery, now placed me in a position which I must literally write my way out of in order to solidify my stand on matters and at the same time expose your insidious plot to subvert me. Observe the fact, wretch, that I wrote the letter in a towering rage at such gross misuse of the word "science fiction," which you yet claim to be the purveyor of, and that in my rages I am not often given to logic; thus it was that two days later, after my fury had abated somewhat, I began to question the contents of my letter, wondering just *what* in hell I *did* write; so it was I penned off an apologetic note asking you not to publish my letter. But what do I see? My letter in print! I swore a mighty oath, then read it and found to my delight I was quite rational in my composition; therefore the fact that it *is* logical negates my apology—which I have no doubt you are scurrilously intending to publish (Yep, I did—Ed.) in your next issue in order to abject me. Well, let it be known your insidious plot is revealed and that my stand is with the letter I at first hadn't wanted published.

The reply you gave my letter is of low buffoonery, hardly an answer from an intelligent person. Since you are so nasty in your puerile little manner, I shall give you blow for blow and don't say you aren't asking for it, because it's right there in black and pulp, whether you mean it or not.

You're just as funny as the hot hinges of hell, aren't you? I suppose, with your mentality, you positively expect me to produce a time machine and project myself into next month for a ready opinion of St. Clair's story. Well, I've no hidden time mechanisms so you'll just have to contain your curious little self, for I'm reserving judgment until then. Come now, Sam, can't you give more than such puerile replies? You don't even appear to be inclined to give me an argument, but merely avoidance, possibly because you are inclined to my stand on matters. I suspect; for anyone who disagreed with me could have given me an argument.

I can, of course, give you an opinion of Leinster's story. Probably the only reason the thing was accepted was for the simple reason Leinster's appellation was on it; if some unknown person had sent it in he or she would have received a rejection slip. JOURNEY TO BARKUT was fantasy lousy and simple. Lousy because it was fantasy and simple because it was unoriginal. . . . If I couldn't write a better fantasy than that, with more originality, I would take my pen and throw it out the window, then cancel the order I put in for a typewriter.

The story was fantasy, Sam, and you claim "scientifiction at its best." That's false advertising. Since I realize Merwin chose this thing, he should have occupied a fantasy editor's seat, for as anything resembling a science-fiction editor, he's a flop, a fiasco. I for one am glad he's gone. I hope you can exercise better taste and judgement. At this utterance, undoubtedly a few thousand fans are arising to do battle, but then a lot of my ancestors stood battling with swords defending their viewpoints till they were cut down; I guess I can face verbal battles with the same resolution and courage in defending my right to an opinion of my own.

Merwin, the man who complained so bitterly about poor characterization, let this redundant nothing slip through his pudgy fingers without a bleat. There are so many unexplored possibilities in science fiction that frankly I can't see why you stoop to fantasy.

I've taken your suggestion to write and tell you my opinion of Leinster's story. It was perhaps an innuendo of yours; however, I bear you no hard feelings and I trust you bear me none for expressing my opinion. A fair offer of friendship.—*Box 445, Olivehurst, Cal.*

Hard feelings? Perish forbid. Our only gripe against you, von Seibel, is that you're trying to fill SS (and TWS and FSM too) all by your little lonesome. This above, you'll recognize, is only half your letter. We cut the gruesome parts out, not wanting to shock any really delicate readers.

Somewhere we read that a soft answer turneth away wrath, so we tried that on you, figuring it wasn't right to hit children, and looky, twice as snarly as ever. But then any-

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one who couldn't enjoy the innocent merriment of JOURNEY TO BARKUT has a built in 22 karat grouch—did you ever take anything for it, Edwardo? No, I'm not making you an offer for it, I mean did you ever have a chiropractor look at it or anything? So you think you can write a better story than JOURNEY, do you? I'm afraid not quite enough of your ancestors were cut down while defending their positions.

Don't let the literary success of having your mad ravings published (at reduced rates) turn your girlish head. With the same treachery that characterized our other actions we have published your letters to cut the ground from under your feet. Ten years from now you will look back at your collection of SS, read your letters and scream in horror. Then, and only then, will you realize that you have been fencing with a Machiavellian strategist who gives no quarter. Far from wasting atomic blows on such a puny antagonist, we merely let you rave on until you convict yourself out of your own bleeding fountain pen. (Hey, when are you going to get a typewriter anyway? Those hand written volumes are murder.)

With that we accept your offer of friendship. See you around.

HIGH BLOOD PLEASURE
by Don Foster

Dear Ed: What a job. If you keep improving the way you've been doing, I'm afraid I'll die of blood pressure. I could not ask for a better job in heaven!

The cover was so good I could of sat and read that. Who dood it? Earle Bergey?

JOURNEY TO BARKUT was one of the best stories I've seen in print. More Leinster!!! Please...

And Bert Chandler's LOST ART was good enough to eat.

THE WHEEL was too short but it had a good plot. Ditto for HOW GREEN WAS MY MARTIAN. I never laughed so hard at any SF story.

TEV was up to its usual standard (as usual).

I was wondering, if THE DAY THE EARTH STOOD STILL was based on THE MASTERS RETURN? I noticed it said that the show was based on a story by Harry Bates but is it the same one?

So in summing up "Congrats" and I mean it. Keep up the good work.—*3344 E. Pender St., Vancouver 6, B.C.*

Yep, Bergey dood the BARKUT cover and also the VULCAN'S DOLLS cover, to forestall your next question. The Harry Bates' story you mean was called FAREWELL TO THE MASTER and that's the one the movie was based upon. I'm worried about your high blood pleasure because—sigh—there's some awful good stories lined up, waiting to let you have it. You'd better relax.

IT'S FANTASTIC
by Wally Weber

Dear Mr. Mines: Murray Leinster is a dirty dog. As I read JOURNEY TO BARKUT, I chanted the motto of all pure science-fictioners, "THIS IS FANTASY AND I HATE EVERY WORD. THIS IS FANTASY AND I HATE EVERY WORD. THIS IS FANTASY AND . . ." well, you have the idea and you know what I'm complaining about. Dirty-dog Leinster led me on, making me hate every word, and then when I had myself completely committed to hating it all, he reversed his field and turned the whole frumious fantasy into undiluted science-fiction. He tricked me, a fanatic of pure science-fiction, into hating every word of a science-fiction story.

If you can think of a worse sin, you should have your mind washed out with soap.

My problem is, how can I repent properly? Would it be enough to seclude myself in some isolated observatory and give the remaining years of my life to computing the value of pi to its ten-thousandth decimal place? Or should I, perhaps, throw myself at the mercies of a cyclotron and will all my mutations to science? I must make amends, somehow.

While anxiously awaiting your advice in this matter, I might just as well carry on my duties as a true fan and gripe my spare heads off about an insignificant item. It has to do with the female element in a story that is otherwise completely free of fantasy. JOURNEY TO BARKUT might as well serve once again as the example. I would like to refer you to the case of Esir and Esim. These two, if we can trust such an unreliable dirty dog as author Leinster, were unrepulsive, alone with Tony in a bedroom, and apparently quite willing to comply enthusiastically with Tony's slightest whim. Had this remarkable situation been carried to its logical conclusion, the January 1952 STARTLING STORIES would have proved ineligible for mailing in this narrow-minded nation. But that is not the point. What is important is that the logical conclusion did not evolve, a fact that makes it pure fantasy in its most disappointing form. For a fantasy story this might be tolerated, but for a science-fiction story there is no excuse for this warping of logic. Similar situations are continually showing up in science-fiction stories where heroines are allowed to appear in the same paragraphs as the heroes. For this reason I plead with you and other editors—keep the feminine element out of science-fiction.

I shall close now, but I suggest you give these matters careful consideration.—*Room 378, Cascade Hall, University of Wash., Seattle 5, Wash.*

P.S. Congrats on going monthly!

We have given the matter long and careful consideration—thirty seconds at least—and have come to the conclusion that locking a man alone in a bedroom with a couple of cuties like

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Esir and Esim and expecting him to retain his resolutions uncrumbled would place such a strain upon the nature of space that it would warp the cosmos beyond repair. This obviously makes it fantasy, but we said all along it was fantasy. You're the one said it was "pure" science fiction, whatever that is. And we—come on, get your head out of that cyclotron!

LET UNBELIEVERS HOWL
by Charles L. Pyron

Dear Ed: I've been a more or less irregular reader of your magazines for several years now, but here in the East it is not easy to find a current issue every month (meaning SS alternating with TWS.) These two are the only continually absorbing and credible mags on stf that I have sampled. Anyhow I am enclosing a check to cover a 12 issue subscription for SS. Would like to do likewise with TWS but I'm not a back issue saver and I haven't seen one on the newsstands since I left Michigan. Please advise me on this if you are able.

I would like at this time to say you are doing a fine job of putting readable fiction on the market. I myself am a college graduate in chemistry and have become more interested in your stuff yearly. Believe me, I take some real razzing from my business and personal associates when they discover my interest in science fiction, but I am perfectly willing to go on record as saying no man need scorn it as kid stuff. This "mature" word I see kicking around in your letter columns is completely beside the point from the readers' view in my opinion. No matter how fantastic some stories are, there is always an idea involved which is worth consideration and possible addition to a man's store of knowledge. I may not be conscious of the fact that the idea sticks with me until it pops up as an adjunct to an idea of my own or as a key aid in understanding a problem or discussion in down-to-earth science.

I will defend you against all comers large and small. I'm perfectly willing to pit my diploma and I.Q. against the best of them as proof of my qualifications to speak as an educated man. So let the unbelievers howl—I love every bit of it.—*A-22 Penn Gardens, Pennsauken, 8, N. J.*

First, to clear up your mechanical troubles: you now have a year's subscription to SS, so that's taken care of. You know, I hope, that SS is a monthly now. I don't know why you can't get TWS on the stands—it's on 'em. Ask your newsdealer to save you a copy—he will. If not, let us know and we'll flood Pennsauken with them.

Thanks for the spirited boost. You've touched upon something there—the concept that science fiction is fundamentally a literature of ideas and that any good story should contain something fresh in the way of a new idea or a new treatment of an old idea. That's exactly what

[*Turn page*]

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—Oscar Hammerstein

If we in America, against our background of free institutions and economic well-being, fail to work out decent patterns of human relations, then the very memory of decency may be expunged in the whole world.

—Eddie Cantor

we're after, in sharp contrast to ordinary "fantastic adventure." Come again.

SANITARY SEMANTICS
by Norman G. Browne

My Dearest Editor: I call you this as I have a mag in my possession that cost me five cents and have recently learned that it is quite valuable. (Vol. I, No. 1, *Startling*).

To quote from the letter column May 1948 Startling; "....keeping the story reviews short and employing your letter to an occasional thought. . ." I hope that this expression of policy by a former editor has your agreement. Accordingly, I give you the following. I think your Mag is wonderful, in my opinion the last ten issues were great. And now for an occasional thought.

The meaning and sounds of words has always been a favorite interest of mine. It has been stated that the most beautiful word in the language is "love." Conversely, the ugliest word is "hate." But all this is a matter of opinion, each to his own tastes. Edgar Allen Poe's favorite word was "ever," thus he wrote "The Raven."

Some of the words I like are "Manhattan"—notice the sweet sounding syllables in combination with the rhythmic repetition of the vowels. Indianapolis Indiana—Alliteration and repetition make these words especially pleasing to the ear. Along the same line is Minneapolis Minnesota (A child writing to his uncle in that city addressed his letter "Many apples, Many soda.")

Another couple of words I like are Neanderthal and Pithecanthropus Erectus. Called my sister the former one day, the next day she was calling me it. She had gone to school and learned its meaning. So I called her a Pithecanthropus Erectus. At first she thought I was swearing at her (I swore I wasn't). A week later she found out what it was at school (It took her that long to learn how to pronounce it). Then I called her a BEM. She went to school and asked her teachers. That stumped them. The school was in a state of confusion for a month then I relented and told them its meaning.

Why did the ancients give all extra-terrestrial objects and places such horrible sounding names? Pity the future students having to recite orally all the well-known landmarks of the moon! Pity the students of Cosmology class having to memorize the names of the asteroids!

There are probably many fans who have never talked to other fans at any length and/or have never had any reason to use S-F terms or names in the course of their everyday speech. These fans quite honestly do not know how to pronounce many S-F words and names. I know, I was one myself. It might prove interesting if you were to print the pronounciation of some of these words. How about some of these for a start;—Heinlein, Leinster, van Vogt, Phobos, Deimos, Arcturus, Centurus, etc.

Did you hear about the fan who stated that if you want to meet other fans and/or start a club, to go to church? All churchgoers profess to read the bible and isn't the bible the greatest S-F story ever written? Some fans are sure to call this statement blasphemous, and others will probably agree with it. No comment because I personally am an agnostic pantheist.

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Would all fans in the VANCOUVER B.C. area get in touch with me? I'm lonely . . . Thanks.

Thanks for printing such a swell mag, and thanks for listening to my few humorous thoughts.—*1150 W. King Edward Ave., Vancouver, B.C., Canada.*

The most beautiful word in the English language, we always thought, was "cellar door." Say it softly and crooningly to yourself and see if it doesn't have more liquid beauty than the one-syllabled, undistinguished grunt which is "love."

So far as we know, Heinlein is pronounced Hine-line, Murray Leinster himself pronounces it Len-ster and you can say van Vogt about like what you should do on Election Day—vote. The rest are easy.

What's an agnostic pantheist? And for Pete's sake, let's not start another battle on religion—these aging nerves couldn't take it.

SOOTHING SYRUP
by Willie Miller

Mines Dear Sam (ouch what a twist!): The other day a little old gray-haired lady with two huge bundles of STARTLING STORIES in her arms got on the bus and do you know that not one single gentleman would give her his seat!? I sat there in amazement. (You worm—Ed.)

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I enjoyed JOURNEY TO BARKUT. It was different from the run-of-the-mill stuff.

By the way, I'm being so happy over that coming out each month your mag is going to be. Real bully of yuh Sam. (Is meaning Mines.)—*VR-1 N.A.S., Patuxent River, Md.*

Willie, did you ever hear the story about the five Boy Scouts who did their Daily Good Deed by escorting a gray-haired ole lady with her arms full of STARTLING STORIES across the street? When they reported it to the scoutmaster, he said, *"Five* of you to take one old lady across the street?" They said, "You think it was easy? She didn't want to go!"

THE LONG AND DULL OF IT
by J. W. Leake

Dar Muster Mines: Having just finished the latest ish of SS, I now take rye and smokes in hand, mount my trusty Corona, and hold target practise, via peiper, on the favorite game of all

[*Turn page*]

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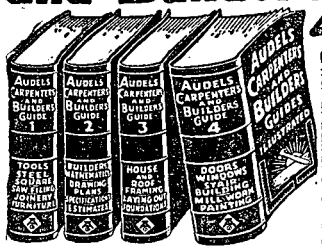

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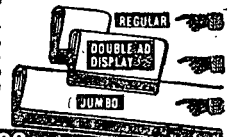

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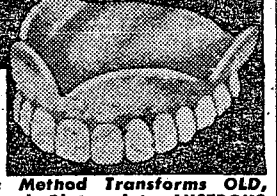

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fans . . . editors. Ah, me lad, you are in for a drubbing. I recollect me that during the few years I've been reading stf, the mortality rate on editors has been terrif. At least they have a turnover that would be guaranteed to make the fortune of any merchant dealing in such. Could it be that ye of the editorial race decide it is not worth the effort expended in reading execrable typing and uninhibited handwriting? Your introductory editorial indicates you are of at least average intelligence; must be that you are as yet unaware of the high premiums imposed on editors by insurance companies. Seriously, though, I question the meaning of the high turnover in stf editors; does it, perchance, indicate that stf is still, after lo, these many years, an infant in the world of mags? Or is it that after a while in the editor's chair editors merely drop out to do some writing on their own hook? Even if the last is true, it is not a healthy sign for the brotherhood of stf. I can't see the cause, but I see the effect, and I don't like it; it is not as it should be. I suspect the trouble, and the necessary measures to mend it, devolve on the publishers and the general tie-in at your end, not at ours, the fan's. Anyway, welcome, paisan, may you have a long and dull, or short and merry, tenure; or, if you can do it, a long and merry one.

Was mightily pleased with the current ish of SS; thought the lead novel, THE STAR WATCHERS, was well worthy of the spot. An intriguing bit of philosophy there; reminiscent of Voltaire's "insects on a ball of mud," but without the bitterness involved in Voltaire's utterance. I'd like to see more of E. Frank Russell. And your cover! I had given up hope of ever surviving the "darts and slings" of life long enough to see the return of such covers. I have long deplored, though I don't believe to editors, the tendency to pulchritude displays on covers of stf. Stf is a form of fiction in its own right: why not put out covers consonant with the contents? Keep it up, amigo, and don't drop back into scantily-clad-voluptuous-gal-in-arms-of-Neanderthalian-hero-waving-blaster-in-alien-atmosphere type of covers. De Vibrating Ether was dull, insofar as there were no wars going on (can hardly call the corrections on Childe Harolde and Roland a war) but otherwise quite good, representative, at least. But it still lags far behind the reader's section of a competitor. 'Fraid I can't offer any suggestions on this matter; can't even tell you why it lags. Would require much too much research and comparison, and I'd rather write and read. (Incidentally, Sir Sam, the poreness of my typing is due mainly to a new, unfamiliar, typewriter, that is neither as fast nor as used to me as my old one.)

Well, I'll push off. A last word. LAY OFF TIME-TRAVEL STORIES, yea, AND SPACE-TIME TOO.—*1120 Euclid Ave., Bristol, Va.*

You call that a drubbing? This is not the kind of punishment which causes editors to take to the hills, to become free-lance writers in a little shack in the Ozarks. Editors suffer from an occupational disease known to some authorities as "stenographers' spread." It is caused by sitting too long in a swivel chair. Other editors are afflicted by bursitis of the

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elbow, caused by bending it too often. Where there is a brass rail, this gives an editor a slightly lop-sided stance so that he is always afterwards more comfortable walking on the side of a hill. But the business which ages most of them so rapidly is the necessity for changing fan letters into readable English. After a siege of that even editors who never wanted to be writers begin to suffer from hallucinations.

NO FAIR GAME
by Jim Harmon

Dear Mr. Mines, Congratulations! Thanks! A monthly STARTLING STORIES! Exclamations of surprise, gratitude, and praise! Frankly, I never thought it would happen. I supposed it was a deep-dyed rule of Thrilling's higher brass that no magazine of theirs would be published oftener than bi-monthly (for a longer display and sale period). Now that it has finally come about however, I am—naturally being a stf fan—not satisfied.

I want a monthly THRILLING WONDER STORIES. Possibly this is also in your plans since STARTLING and WONDER have always been published on the same schedule and in the same format. If not, it is a pity. In fact, if you were only going to make one of the Thrilling Twins a monthly, it seems to me that it would be more fitting (if nothing else) to make that one WONDER, since it has the better history and tradition.

However, I suppose circulation figures rather than glory decided the question for you mercenary characters, the editors. There is the concession that STARTLING does have the book-length novels. Will this mean a new one every month? Probably not since you will probably want to present a wider selection of story material meaning a short novel *a la* WONDER with several novelets and shorts in some issues. Still most of the Thrilling magazines have a definite constant policy regarding story lengths, and STARTLING's has evidently been successful. If you do try for a new novel every month I predict you will have trouble getting them. Top quality ones, that is. We both know that there isn't enough good stf being turned out, i.e. not enough good writers to fill all the extant magazines, and long novels are even harder to get than shorts and novelets, because many top stf writers just don't write long novels at all, or only one every few years. Possibly this is because they are harder work than shorter pieces and the places to sell them are limited.

But no matter what, here's wishing you the best of luck with a monthly STARTLING STORIES, and hoping for a monthly WONDER, trimmed edges, a bi-monthly FANTASTIC STORY MAGAZINE (where I saw the announcement about SS), a WONDER STORY QUARTERLY, and bigger magazines for 35¢. (No, I don't think we'll get them all, but I'm like a kid with Santa Claus: asking for everything so I might get more than I expected.)

Incidentally while I'm writing I'd like to con-

[*Turn page*]

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gratulate you, Mr. Mines, on doing a highly competent job of editing SS, TWS & FSM. You had some mighty big shoes to fill in those of Sam Merwin but you seem to be doing it. In one respect I think you're better than Sam M No. 1. You don't insult and humiliate relatively innocent people in the letter section (an extremely vulnerable spot) as Merwin often did. While an editor may consider any letter-writer who says anything against him or his magazine fair game, he should remember that his words carry a lot more weight than the reader's and that he is taking unfair advantage when he insults the reader.

All this is even truer when it comes to the fan editor who says something against a professional magazine in his own publication of perhaps a circulation of a hundred and then gets ripped apart for it in a magazine of a hundred thousand circulation. It may be democratic to say that both editors are equals, but it isn't exactly logical.—*427 East 8th Street, Mt. Carmel, Ill.*

You have a point in comparing the circulations of the fanzines and prozines in relation to their influence. However, when a reader sends his insults to the prozine to be printed, he is then getting the full benefit of the larger circulation and henceforth takes his chances on a reply in kind. Gotta suppress crime, don't we?

The present policy of getting a long novel for each issue of SS will be continued so far as possible. If it ever becomes impossible to get enough novels of quality we may use other combinations of stories, but that doesn't seem too likely. In fact we are more than encouraged by the increasing high quality of the material being written today. And that's more important than trimmed edges, so keep your fingers crossed.

THE LAST FRONTIER
by Marion Zimmer Bradley

With all due respect for the president of such a sage organization as the U.S. Rocket Society, I would like to take exception to the remarks of R. L. Farnsworth. He says, in effect, that the conquest of Space is a necessity to the human race.

This is wishful thinking of the worst sort. Romantics and science-fiction writers like to think so. History, alas, is not in agreement.

The human race is still in the infancy of escapism. Look at the record. The lure of a frontier, a horizon, a fresh start, has always kept mankind from settling down to really solve, not just defer, the problems of existence. For instance: it was always the misfits, the failures, who left their place of birth and went somewhere else; if a man made a mess of his life in old England, for instance, got into jail, refused to accept normal standards of behavior, why, there were always the colonies. If a man failed to make a living in New England or the South, why, there was the California Gold Rush and the lure of the golden West to offer

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the promise of a fresh start.

California, according to certain crackpot sciences, is a significant state. It is significant in reality, because it was the last frontier, the last horizon. Now that the entire surface of the globe has been explored and charted, man is up against his problem again; shall he settle down and solve his problems, or shall he run away again? There are *no* fresh grounds to run to; but he can never resolve to sit down and learn to live with himself. Instead, he formulates the dream of space. Now, I am not saying space travel is impossible. I am saying it is impractical. The cost, in irreplaceable materials which would leave the planet forever, in deaths and in work, is simply too high. The money that goes now into rocket research, given to some agency for world peace, could practically *buy* peace forever. While there are still wars, while humanity has not learned to live decently on the resources already at its command, space travel is premature, and if undertaken will end in fiascos like those of the conquest of the West.

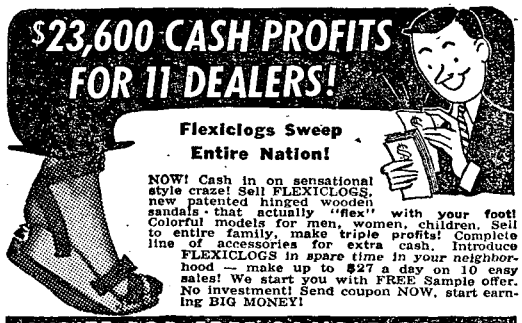
A race that still desires a horizon is still in its infancy. The mind that dreams of space travel is an immature mind. The end of new frontiers of geography presents a choice to the human race; shall it carry its great potentialities into the great fields of science, of biology, of agriculture and medicine, into the conquest of mankind's great diseases, into the perfecting of human character, or shall it cry, like a little boy, for a bigger playground?

Our own planet will be sufficient, for a million years, to perfect man's knowledge of himself. Until then, it is my august opinion, to which I have as good a right as Mr. Farnsworth to his, that Space Travel would only present new problems to which humanity would have no solution. We would probably muddle through them somehow . . . we muddled through the conquest of the West with no greater damage than the extinction of the buffalo and the Redmen, and the temporary collapse of all social standards into a code of violence . . . . but it would be better to wait a few thousand years, until we can go out into space in the dignity of a race which was fully mature. Let's sit down. . . and let our culture catch up with our technology. It will only be a few thousand years. And that's nothing to a race like good old homo-sap—if he can refrain from blowing himself up with his shiny new atomic pop-gun.

By the way, I liked JOURNEY TO BARKUT very well. In fact, I like most "lost-world" stories. And I'm not indicting science-fiction; I love it. However, I think it is a bit silly to try to make it come true in real life. After all, no grown-up goes around looking for a talking teddy-bear, no matter how much he may have loved Winnie-the-Pooh when he was six years old.—*Box 246, Rochester, Texas.*

What have we here, a turncoat? Are all man's high aspirations nothing more than little boys playing with Teddy Bears? So far as your remarks go on the misfits, the failures, who were always looking for something easier

[*Turn page*]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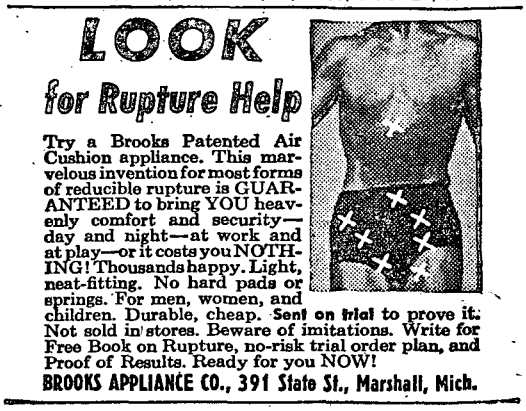
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around the next bend in the road instead of staying home and solving their problems—we agree, as you may have noticed in our recent exchange with Joe Gibson. And undoubtedly some of that is involved in the hoopla about space travel. But you're overlooking something.

Space travel, exploration of other planets and all the rest of it, is a legitimate extension of man's knowledge and science. As a reasoning creature, as a scientist, man *wants to know* and he is entitled to that knowledge if he has the skill to push ahead the frontiers of science. There are, therefore, two frontiers. One is escape for the misfits. The other is the frontier of knowledge. Let's keep the distinction clear. But apart from that you've got a point, though I was shaken to my grass roots to see you talking down your favorite literature.

SPACE PROBLEM
by Milton C. Erland

Dear Sir: I am one of those fans who has been reading the mag since 'way back when, and I can recall many fine stories that appeared in STARTLING, and your companion mag THRILLING WONDER.

Now, I still like to re-read those wonderful old stories and to continue to read the newer ones, but I have a problem. Oh, what a problem!

Wife says: "Seven boxes of fantasy magazines! Who ever said fantasy was light reading should have their head examined. Get those things out of here, or else!"

So, here we go.

Now, you fans, do you want to help me hold my wife? If so, write me. Remember, I only have one issue of any one month or year. Please do not ask me to break a serial, if one exists. I have *everything* back to 1943, practically intact. Good covers, printers condition, but I'm no dealer, just a fellow fan. (also a few back to 1939).

I want to see if anyone besides myself has that collector's itch. I'll sell COD postage plus, any or all, and oh boy, can we use that extra closet space. Our baby, now five months old, needs space too so come one come all.

Write me, please. If in New York or vicinity, phone, I'm in the Bronx book, all two lines.

Best wishes.—*3900 Spuyten Duyvil Parkway, New York City 71.*

The truck will be in front of your door about two hours after this mag hits the stands, Milton.

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What was that about someone helping you hold your wife?

NO CHARACTER
by Joseph Semenovich

Dear Editor:

I am not a "character" as you so called me in your comment of my letter in the January issue. In fact you misinterpreted one whole paragraph of my letter.

I did not write (or so that I remember) that maybe Merwin was the author of "The Last Story." Anyone would know that he isn't. I simply said that he (Merwin) would have probably saved the same thing as the editor in the "Last Story" did—save a rejection slip. In fact I remember putting parenthesis around that point, yet the parenthesis did not appear on my letter in THE ETHER VIBRATES. It may be though, that I myself made the mistake while typing it. But this I shall say again. Anyone would know that Merwin did not write "The Last Story," he wrote the first one (in the issue, that is).

I'm putting out a fanzine, the first issue is out (I must admit that it wasn't so terriffic in the mimeoing) but I need material and subscribers for the second issue. How about some of you fans who read this, write me some articles. I have enough fiction at the present but if it is exceptionally good I'll take it. Articles, fact or otherwise will be gladly accepted though. Also the zine costs a dime if you want it.

Well that's all for this letter, except that I'm anxiously awaiting to read your next issue.—*40-14 10 St., Long Island City, 1, N. Y.*

Our apologies. We did misinterpret your letter, as became quite clear on a second reading. We also had to cut some of this letter, but your fanzine plug is in. That should make amends, I hope.

Be on hand next month for George O. Smith's big beautiful space novel—THE HELLFLOWER—and a new collection of wild, wacky and winsome letters. Be seeing you.

—*The Editor*

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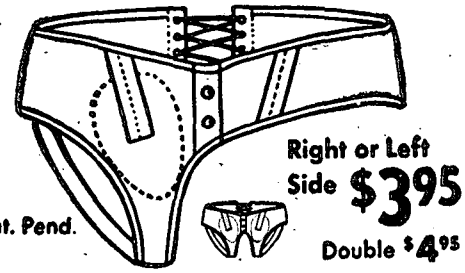

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